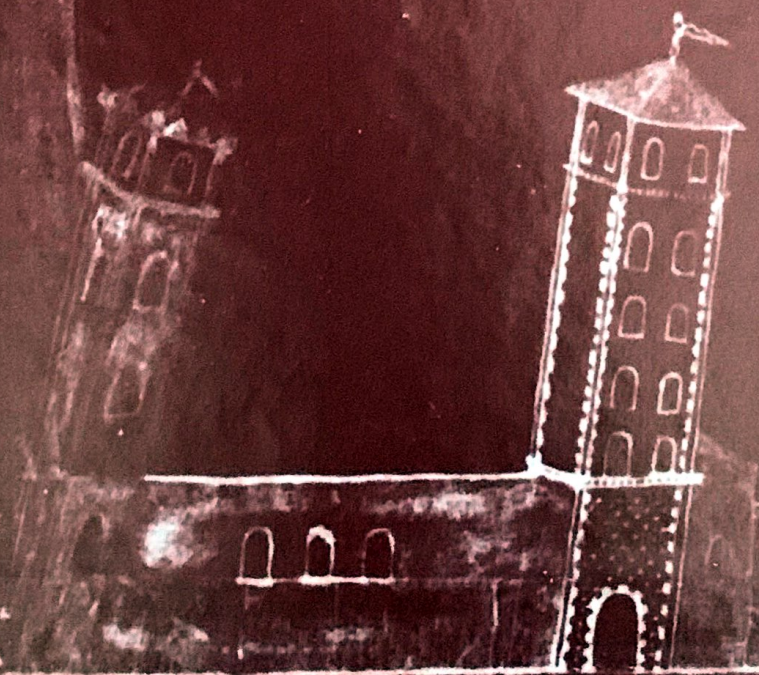


*La grande porta era alla S. S. S.*







*Campana che suona del ora di*

*Campana per le canon*





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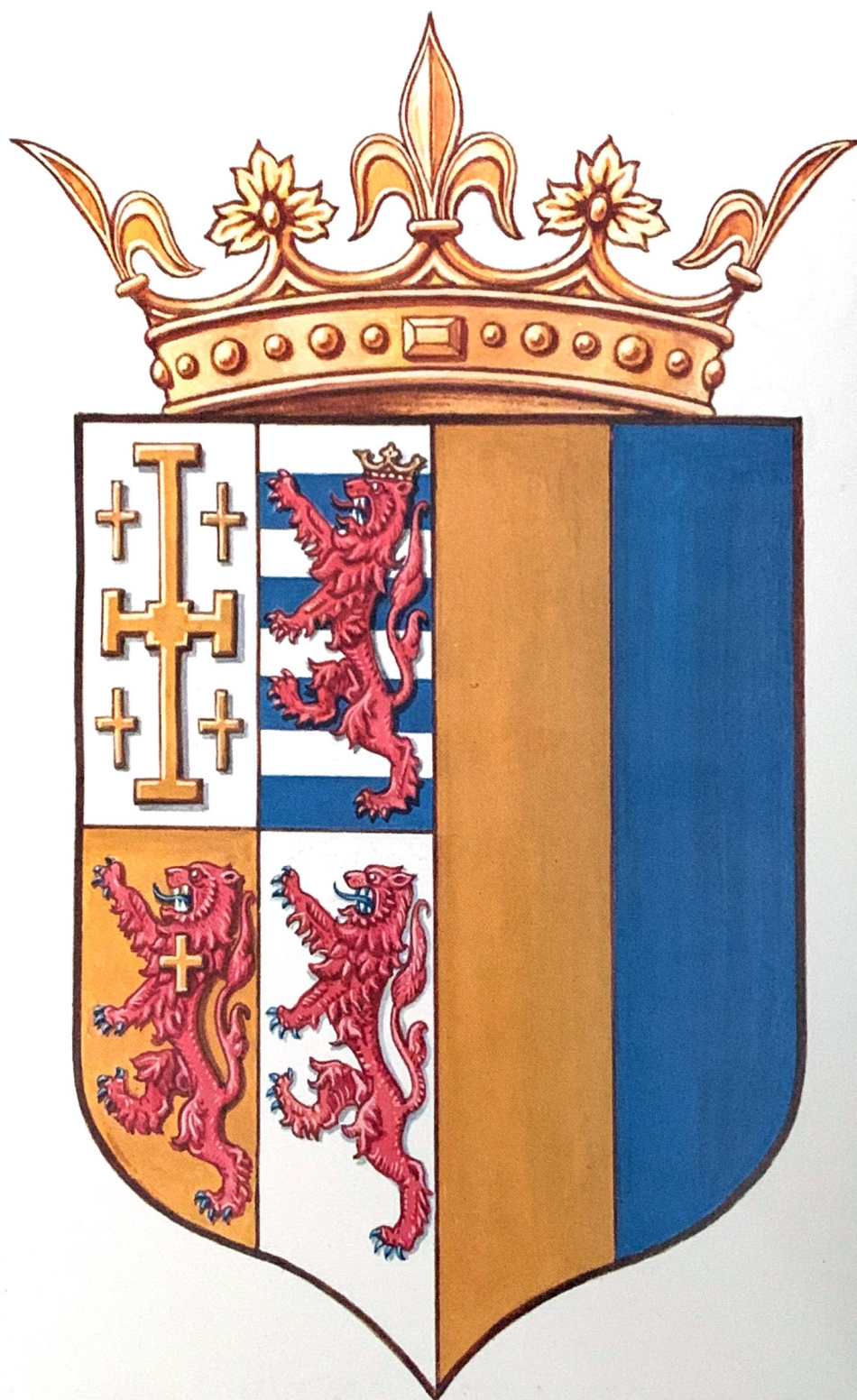
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# CATERINA CORNARO

QUEEN OF CYPRUS





The arms of Caterina Cornaro



# CATERINA CORNARO QUEEN OF CYPRUS

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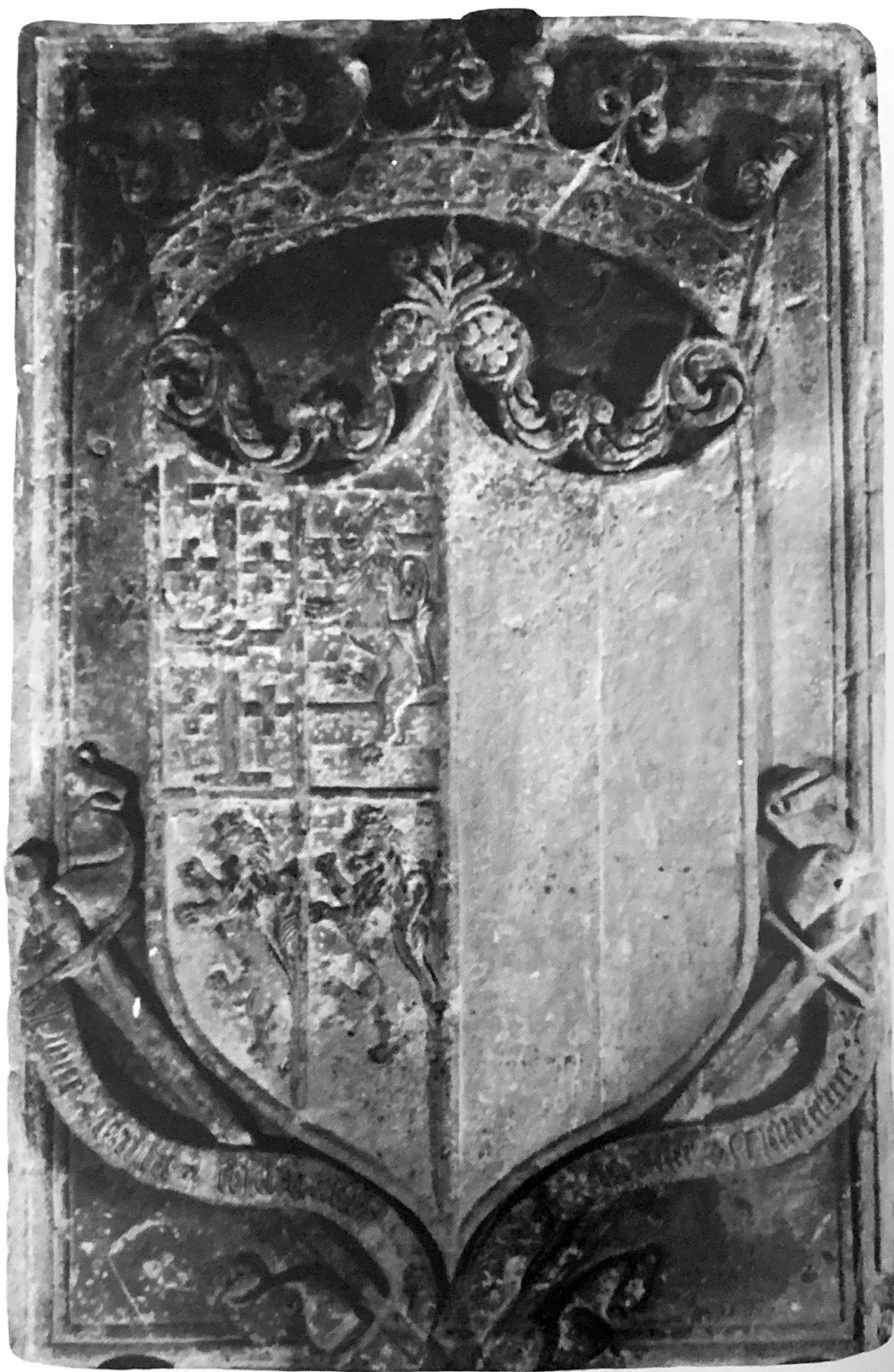
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Stone panel with the arms of Caterina; from her castle at Asolo  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)



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## COLOUR

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The arms of Caterina Cornaro. Per pale: dexter, quarterly, Argent, a cross potent quadrate between four plain crosslets, all Or, for Jerusalem; barry of eight Argent and Azure a lion rampant Gules crowned Or for Lusignan; Or a lion rampant Gules and on its shoulder a plain crosslet of the field, for Cyprus; sinister per pale Or and Azure for Cornaro. The arms of Jerusalem are a unique exception to the heraldic rule against placing metal on metal; it dates from after the Lusignans went to Cyprus. Drawing by John Hawes

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In beginning to express our thanks to the many people who have assisted us in the preparation of this book first place must be given to the authors of the three essays that compose it. They have been both punctilious and punctual in delivering their contributions and thereafter judiciously receptive of editorial suggestions; for the depth and quality of the research involved the pages that follow speak more eloquently than this page can.

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DAVID HUNT  
IRO HUNT

## P R E F A C E

It is five hundred years ago that Caterina Cornaro abdicated the throne of Cyprus. The Doge of Venice and the Senators had been pressing her hard. They were anxious to add the island to their Mediterranean possessions for reasons both of trade and of defence. When they saw they had prevailed upon her they were generous in external gestures. There was a stately ceremony in the square in front of the Gothic cathedral of Famagusta and, after a storm-tossed return journey of three months, another in her native Venice, with a royal progress from the Lido to St. Mark's Square and a formal renunciation before the high altar of the basilica. Then, still with the title of Queen, she withdrew to her little, sub-alpine dominion of Asolo, there to pass into legend. The last queen of the last Crusader kingdom enjoyed the tranquillity of her villa-palace in its park, with no further cares than to listen to the lutes of her musicians and the sonnets of her court poets.

Her previous seventeen years had been anything but tranquil. She began life well enough, in a rich and well-connected Venetian family, but at the age of eighteen, having been married already by proxy four years earlier, she sailed to the eastern Mediterranean to consummate the marriage with James II, the last of the Lusignan line to reign in Cyprus. He was king by right of possession and because he had been regularly appointed by his suzerain, the Sultan of Egypt; but to many contemporaries he was a bastard and a usurper. He had certainly murdered men in cold blood with his own hands; but from all the evidence she seems to have been contented with him. Their married life had lasted only seven months when he died unexpectedly. Their posthumous child lived for only a year. Caterina, now Queen-Regnant, was surrounded by treachery which erupted into insurrections and assassinations. By bitterly-felt experience she learned what the Kingdom of Cyprus had become: disunited at home and exposed to the intrigues of rival powers, Christian and Moslem.

What it had been in the past is explained in the opening chapter of this book by Dr. Edbury, who has specialised in the history of the Latin kingdoms of the Levant. The great bulk of the population was Greek, as it has been for the past three thousand years, but there had been a conquest, like the Norman conquest of England, by French-speaking people who had left the Kingdom of Jerusalem after the conquest of the city and most of Palestine by Saladin. The result was a curious mixture, but one that survived as the basis of a dynasty of



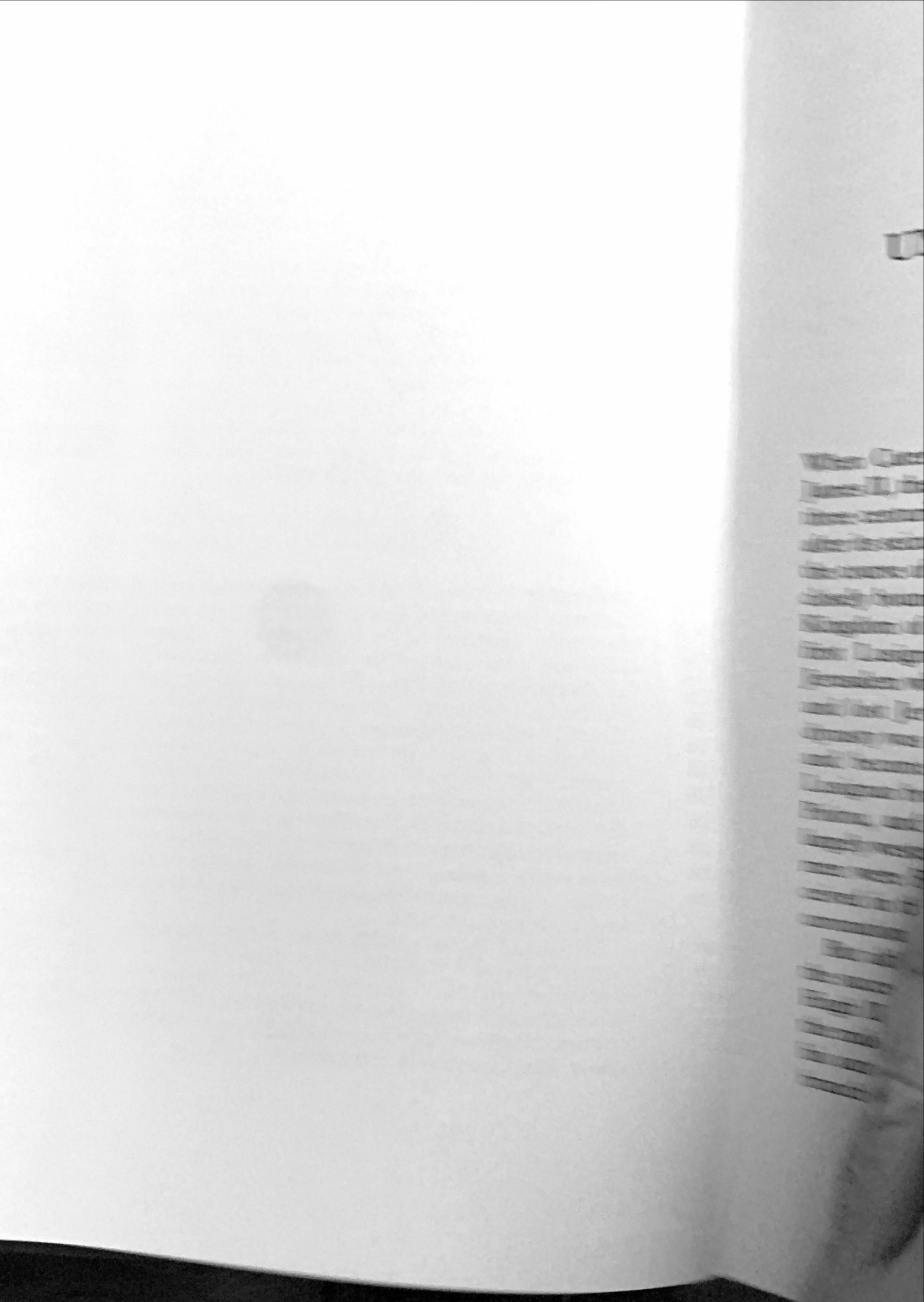
three hundred years. By the end of that period the Greek element, as Dr. Edbury notes, was rising in status. King James's father had two Greek wives and a Greek mistress; both his legitimate daughter and his bastard son, who fought each other for the crown, spoke Greek in preference to French. Other elements also rose into prominence. Venetians, Genoese, Sicilians and Catalans brought a fresh virulence to the rivalries which lacerated the Cypriot upper class. The Proto-Mafioso Rizzo di Marino, who thought all problems could be solved by a quick dagger-thrust, was one of the King's favourites.

The detailed narrative of the rise and reign of James the Bastard is told by Dr. Joachim Joachim, himself a Cypriot writer, in the vivid and forceful style of the contemporary Cypriot chroniclers on whom he draws. It is one of those truly Renaissance stories, rather larger than life and brightly coloured, which might have adorned the pages of Machiavelli as an illustration of his cynical statecraft. It could be taking place at one of the Italian courts he describes, but in the background there is the menace of the Mameluke Sultan in Cairo and the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople. It was this external threat which moved the Venetians to take Cyprus into their own hands. Their pressure on the Queen is dramatically expounded by Dr. Joachim.

‘The setting sun, and music at the close,  
As the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last.’

Shakespeare's lines give the atmosphere of the last chapter, which deals with Caterina's retirement in Asolo. She has always attracted poets, from Bembo to Browning. Painters too; her last days are touched by the splendour of Giorgione, born only a few miles from Asolo and patronised by Caterina. Gentile Bellini, and perhaps Titian, portrayed her; many later artists have been inspired to reconstruct episodes of her life. This is the theme of Terence Mullaly, who has specialised in the Venetian Renaissance. He has collected from ancient and modern sources a detailed iconography, for her portraits, genuine and imaginative, are numerous. With equal thoroughness he has drawn on the literary sources who have celebrated her little court at the Barco, her famous country villa near Asolo, and have contributed to her legend. It is a legend that has been kept alive down the centuries by many biographies. She has been the subject of no less than five operas, including one by Donizetti. She is affectionately remembered in Venice, where a boat called after her still takes part in the annual regatta.

This book is offered in the hope that an up-to-date biography of Caterina Cornaro may be of interest as an account of one of the great ladies of the Renaissance and as a contribution to the history of Cyprus. It remains a troubled island but the beauties of its Gothic and Venetian monuments are still a source of pleasure to increasing numbers of travellers. This is the record of one striking episode in its romantic past.





# CYPRIT SOCIETY UNDER LUSIGNAN RULE

Peter W. Edbury

When Caterina Cornaro arrived in Cyprus in 1472 to marry James II, the Lusignan dynasty had been ruling there for almost three centuries. The Lusignans had acquired the island in 1192 after its seizure from the Byzantines by Richard the Lionheart in the course of the Third Crusade. The family's fortunes had been closely bound up with the crusades and the history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem since the early twelfth century, and the first Lusignan ruler, Guy, had himself been the King of Jerusalem who in 1187 had suffered defeat at the hand of Saladin and lost Jerusalem to the Moslems. The real founder of the dynasty was Guy's brother, Aimery, who succeeded him in 1194 and became the first King of Cyprus two years later. The Lusignan brothers were younger sons of the Lord of Lusignan in Poitou, and they established a regime in Cyprus which was largely western European in outlook. The kings and their leading men were French-speaking Catholics; their kingship was conceived in the western mould with western ideas of inheritance, coronation and royal authority.

But although the family name of Lusignan continued in use the succession did not run true. In 1267, on the death of King Hugh II, Aimery of Lusignan's direct descendants died out in the male line and the throne passed to Hugh's cousin, the son of his aunt. The new King, Hugh III, was a member of a cadet branch of the princely house of Antioch, a man who could trace

his ancestry to Bohemund of Taranto, a hero of the First Crusade and first Prince of Antioch, and to Raymond of Poitiers; the Prince of Antioch whose dalliance with Eleanor of Aquitaine at the time of the Second Crusade was said to have led to her divorce by King Louis VII of France. All subsequent kings of Cyprus could trace their descent in the male line from Hugh III and through him claim ancestry in the royal house of Jerusalem and the house of Antioch as founded in the wake of the First Crusade at the close of the eleventh century.

In 1269 King Hugh III inherited the throne of Jerusalem. By that date the Holy City itself was irretrievably lost and the surviving strongholds were under considerable pressure from the Moslems. Hugh's attempts to improve the Christian position were frustrated by lack of co-operation and a challenge to his own right to rule, and in 1291 his son, Henry II, found himself unable to prevent the extinction of the Latin states along the coast of what is now Israel and the Lebanon when the Moslems launched a full-scale attack on Acre (Akko). After 1291 Cyprus formed the most easterly outpost of western Christendom in the Mediterranean. Its kings continued to take their titles from both kingdoms. In the fourteenth century they even held separate coronation ceremonies: in Nicosia as kings of Cyprus; in Famagusta as kings of Jerusalem. In 1393 the dynasty acquired a third crown, that of Lesser Armenia, following the death of a distant kinsman whose kingdom had in any case been lost to the Moslems some twenty years earlier.

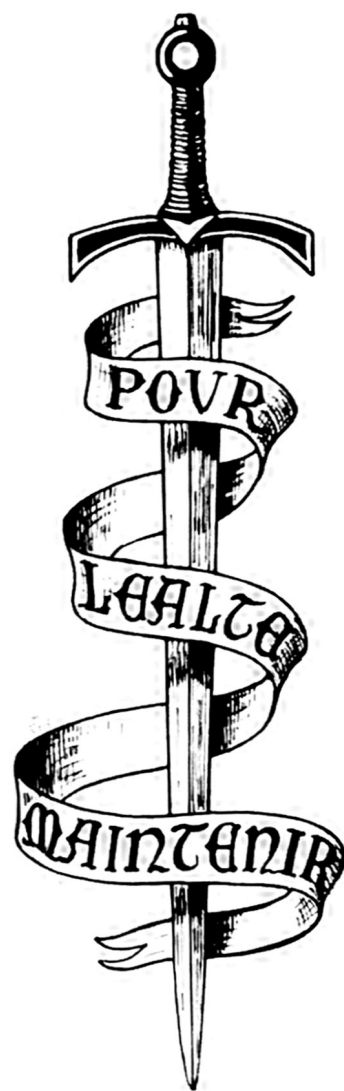
But despite their distinguished ancestry and high-sounding titles, the kings of Cyprus rarely caught popular imagination in the West. The most famous was King Peter I (1359-1369) who toured western Europe raising the crusading army which in 1365 sacked the Egyptian city of Alexandria. After Peter's reign, disastrous wars with the Genoese in the 1370s and with Egyptian Mamelukes in the 1420s, together with economic decline, meant that the kings acquired a rather tarnished image. Then in 1458 the dynasty failed in the male line. John II had a daughter, Charlotte, and her accession gave rise to a political crisis in which her illegitimate half-brother, James, seized power, had himself crowned king and waged war on Charlotte and her supporters who were eventually defeated in 1464.



The Lusignan regime was supported by a French-speaking aristocracy and a Latin ecclesiastical hierarchy. The earliest western settlers in Cyprus after the conquest were people who, like Guy and Aimery of Lusignan, had lost their lands and incomes in the Christian states in Syria and Palestine. Some were members of their personal retinues; others were dispossessed knights and burgesses who welcomed the opportunity to acquire a new livelihood in the island once it became clear that the Third Crusade was not going to restore much of the former Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem to Christian rule. Guy and Aimery distributed fiefs and were said to have endowed three hundred knights and two hundred mounted sergeants in this way. It would seem that the policy was to attract as many men as possible and provide them with a vested interest in ensuring the survival of the new regime. The knights owed military service to the crown. They brought with them from Jerusalem their customs governing tenure, military obligations and the inheritance of fiefs, and these customs proved so durable that as late as the 1530s the Venetian authorities in Cyprus thought it worth having some of the thirteenth-century treatises of feudal law translated into Italian.

These legal treatises, often referred to collectively as the *Assizes of Jerusalem*, are among the most striking literary monuments to survive from the Latin East. They mostly date from the mid-thirteenth century and are chiefly concerned to describe the feudal customs and judicial procedures as operated in the High Court. Although in 1369 the longest and most famous, that by John of Ibelin Count of Jaffa (died 1266), was officially designated as a work of reference in the High Court of Cyprus, they were originally conceived as unofficial compilations for private circulation. Those by Philip of Novara and Geoffrey Le Tor were probably written in Cyprus with Cypriot conditions explicitly in mind; others, notably those by John of Ibelin and his son James, were written in Latin Syria but continued to be copied and read in Cyprus after the fall of the Christian possessions on the mainland.

Until the third quarter of the fourteenth century the Cypriot landed nobility was an extremely homogeneous group, being mostly descended from men of western European extraction who



The insignia of the Order of the Sword, established by Peter I, with the motto 'Pour Lealté Maintenir'

sus ne l'yeut apres riens  
demander.

**Q**uant lō se clame  
encourt d'autre  
on li met sus aucune ma  
le faite. celui de qui lon  
cest clame ou sur qui lō  
amū la male faite noie  
se q lō l'inet sus el clai ou  
autremēt. & le clamāt ou  
celui q la male faite ha  
mī sus ne leuffre aprover  
ains q la court sen parte  
Jecuit q il est qte & de li  
ure de cele qrele. & ne ne  
st plus tenu de respōdre  
ace lui q de lui cest clame  
ou qui la male faite  
mise sus q ausy cō celui  
de q lō se clame encourt  
en sa presence ou a q lō met  
sus male faite se il ne res  
pōt au clai ou ne noie la  
male faite ou neuffre a  
respōdre se le seignor & la  
court le veullent escouter

ou il ne demāde ior au  
clai ains q la court se par  
te ou ne dit raisō por  
q il ne li doit respōdre  
ace clai ou a se q lō l'inet  
sus & tel q court les gar  
de ou conoisse est atāt  
de ce q lō l'inet sus el clai  
ou autremēt est qte me  
semble celui de q lō se  
clame ou a q lō met sus  
male faite de ce q lō l'inet  
sus el clai ou autremēt se  
ille noie & le clamāt ne  
leuffre aprover ains q la  
court se parte. Car dro  
it doit estre comū & ygal  
& il ne le seroit mie en  
cest cas sensy nestoit.

**Q**uant lō doit dire  
& faire q vaint re  
courer saisine dece de  
q lō la dessaysi.

**Q**uant aucun  
de saistist au  
tre daucune



had settled in the Christian states on the mainland of Syria and Palestine before coming to Cyprus. Indeed, throughout the thirteenth century western society in Cyprus was regularly reinforced by refugees from Moslem advance, and there are a number of instances of men holding fiefs in both Cyprus and the Kingdom of Jerusalem simultaneously. Only Latin Christians could hold fiefs, and the nobility came to be dominated by a comparatively small number of closely interrelated families from whose ranks the kings drew their counsellors, military commanders, ambassadors and household officers. Some clearly became very wealthy, and just as the kings of Cyprus came to have a claim to be kings of Jerusalem, so too some of the nobles had claims to lordships in the Holy Land. Thus in the fourteenth century we find in Cyprus titular lords of Beirut and Arsuf and counts of Jaffa, descendants of the actual holders of these territories in the thirteenth century.

Generally relations with the crown were good. From the 1210s and more especially after the civil war of 1229-1233, the most prominent family was the house of Ibelin. Already of major importance in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and closely linked to the Lusignans by ties of blood, the Ibelins came to hold a commanding influence within aristocratic society until the mid-fourteenth century, monopolising the posts of seneschal and constable of Cyprus. But their role was as advisers and kinsmen rather than as 'over-mighty subjects' or 'mayors of the palace'. Occasionally we hear of disputes, as in 1271 when the knights refused to serve King Hugh III in Palestine, or in 1306-1310 when the ineffective Henry II was supplanted by his younger brother who enjoyed the support of a substantial section of the aristocracy. But these seem to have been isolated episodes. One reason for harmony was doubtless the common interest of king and nobles in maintaining the *status quo* in the face of possible Moslem aggression; another may lie in the fact that at no point throughout the history of Cyprus under the Lusignans did any nobleman hold a castle as a part of his fief. At most the nobles would have possessed fortified watch-towers, and without a military base from which to resist royal authority co-operation rather than opposition would have seemed the wisest policy.

After the mid-fourteenth century we can detect a change.

*Opposite*

A page from a manuscript of the Assizes of Jerusalem; parchment, early fourteenth century with fifteenth-century additions (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

Peter I placed the aristocracy under considerable strain thanks to his military demands and his policy of enfeoffing foreigners in his service. In the end he fell victim to a palace *coup* staged by his own vassals, the only King of Cyprus to die violently. Then in 1373-1374 Cyprus was invaded by the Genoese who took large numbers of nobles into exile in the West from which many never returned. Political upheavals, the effects of plague and perhaps excessive intermarriage took their toll. Many of the families of French crusader origin died out, and they came in to be replaced either by Italians or Spaniards or by Greeks. The regulations against non-Latins holding fiefs seem to have been allowed to lapse, and by the second quarter of the fifteenth century Greek and Italian had come to replace French as the predominant language of the ruling class. The civil war of the 1460s accelerated this change still further, with the exile of Charlotte's supporters and the enfeoffment of the adventurers and mercenary captains who had helped James II to power.

The history of the Latin Church in Cyprus in certain respects parallels that of the lay nobility. In the 1190s Aimery of Lusignan arranged for the creation of a Latin hierarchy consisting of an archbishop of Nicosia and suffragan bishops at Paphos, Famagusta and Limassol. The earliest bishops were, like the earliest nobles, drawn from the Christian states in Syria and Palestine. Each diocese had a cathedral chapter, but outside the cities of Nicosia and Famagusta parish churches were few. In the 1360s the whole of the diocese of Limassol contained only three Latin parishes — the point being that outside the principal towns the western Christian population was negligible. In addition, there were a number of monastic foundations, several of which began as dependent priories of houses in the Holy Land and to which the surviving monks or nuns came as a result of the Moslem conquests. All the main monastic and religious orders were represented: Benedictine, Cistercian, Premonstratensian, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite and others. There were also military orders: the Templars until their suppression at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Hospitallers, who acquired most of the Templar properties and remained the largest single landowning corporation in the island until the Turkish conquest of the sixteenth century, and also the Teutonic



Knights and the English Order of St. Thomas of Canterbury. These orders were endowed in the island primarily with the intention of augmenting their resources in the struggle to defend the Christian possessions on the mainland, rather than assigning them a role in the defence of Cyprus itself.

The picture is of a substantial religious establishment, well endowed with lands and tithes, catering for the needs of the ruling class. The clergy themselves were rarely drawn from the nobility and many, especially in the fourteenth century, were from France or Italy. Prolonged vacancies and absenteeism were common, and so it is no surprise to find that the Latin church failed to prevent the ruling élite, or indeed its own clergy, becoming assimilated into Greek society. In 1368 the Pope complained of the large number of noblewomen and commoners attending Greek or other eastern churches. In the fifteenth century the papacy was obliged to sanction intermarriage between Latins and Greeks and marriages and funerals for the Catholic population celebrated in accordance with the Greek rite. Use of the Latin rite declined, and in Paphos and Limassol even the cathedrals fell into disuse with the canons living in Nicosia, content simply to draw their revenues. The higher clergy were Greek speaking, and the two members of the Lusignan family who in the fifteenth century were raised to the cardinalate, Hugh (died 1442) and Lancelot (died 1451), were regarded in the West as more Greek than Latin.

In the Middle Ages there were three walled towns in Cyprus: Nicosia, Famagusta and Kyrenia. Kyrenia, with its fortress dominating the eastern side of the harbour, seems to have been the best defended, enduring protracted sieges in 1232-1233, 1373-1374 and 1460-1464. In the sixteenth century the Venetians encased the fortress in a massive masonry shell designed to withstand artillery, and it is their construction which continues to overshadow the town. Substantial sections of the Lusignan fortress survive within the Venetian ramparts. Fragments of the town wall also survive, notably the circular tower which formed the south-western bastion. At Famagusta there was a similar medieval fortress guarding the entrance to the harbour. For

ninety years during their occupation the Genoese were able to fend off sporadic Lusignan assaults, and the town eventually capitulated to James II in 1464 after a four-year siege. The Venetians rebuilt the walls to withstand artillery and, as at Kyrenia, encased the medieval fortress in an additional shell. The effectiveness of the sixteenth-century work was amply demonstrated during a ten-month siege by the Turks in 1570-1571 — a siege which eventually resulted in Famagusta's surrender and the end of the Venetian rule.

At Nicosia the medieval walls seem to have been ill-planned and, in so far as there was never any serious attempt to hold the Lusignan capital against an invader, largely ineffective. Here towards the end of their period of rule the Venetians built completely new defences, tearing down the existing ramparts and large sections of the city to make way for them. The sixteenth-century walls enclose a circular area and have eleven angle-bastions placed at regular intervals around them. They remain to this day as a splendid example of military engineering, designed to meet the threat of an enemy whose tactic would be to force an entry by making a breach in a fortification by cannonade rather than by the time-honoured medieval techniques of mining or frontal assault, and in scale and design they can be compared with the best that were being built in Italy at that period.

Elsewhere in the island the chief strongholds were the three northern mountain-top castles: St. Hilarion, Buffavento and Kantara. These castles were first built by the Byzantines in the centuries immediately before the Latin conquest, and were probably originally conceived as look-outs and places of refuge, but in the Lusignan period they were used as summer retreats for the royal family and also to house important prisoners. St. Hilarion guarded the pass between Kyrenia and Nicosia, and was clearly of considerable strategic importance during the civil war of 1229-1233 and the Genoese invasion of 1373-1374.

Otherwise there were few fortified points. Small castles survive at both Paphos and Limassol. The Templars owned a fort at Gastria to the north of Famagusta, and the Hospitallers a keep at Kolossi. The existing building at Kolossi is of fifteenth-century date, and, although of solid construction, should probably be regarded primarily as the Order's administrative head-

*Opposite*

St. Hilarion Castle. Originally a Byzantine fortress it was greatly strengthened by the Lusignans who used it both as a strongpoint and as a summer residence

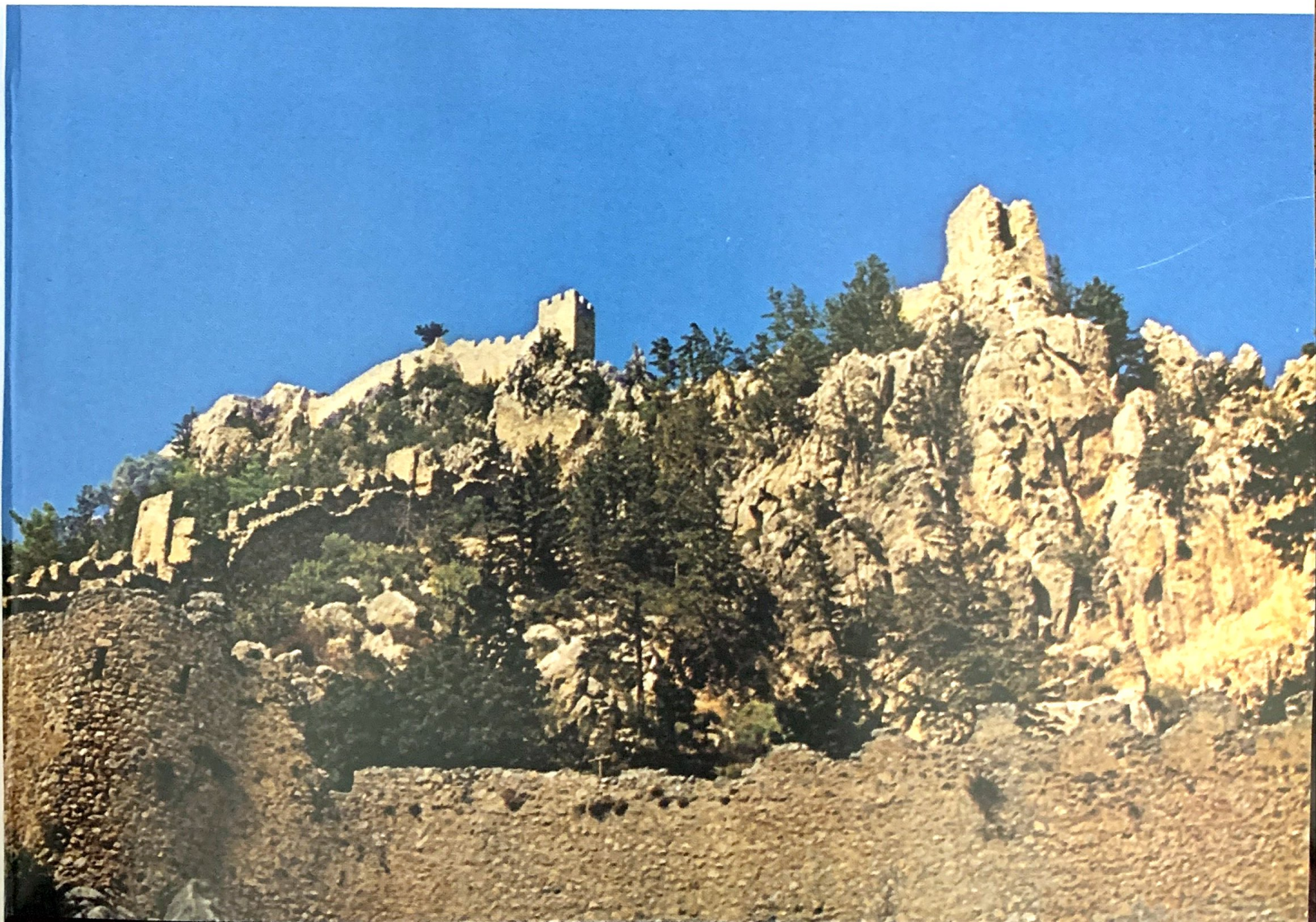
St. Hilarion Castle; from the south

*Overleaf*

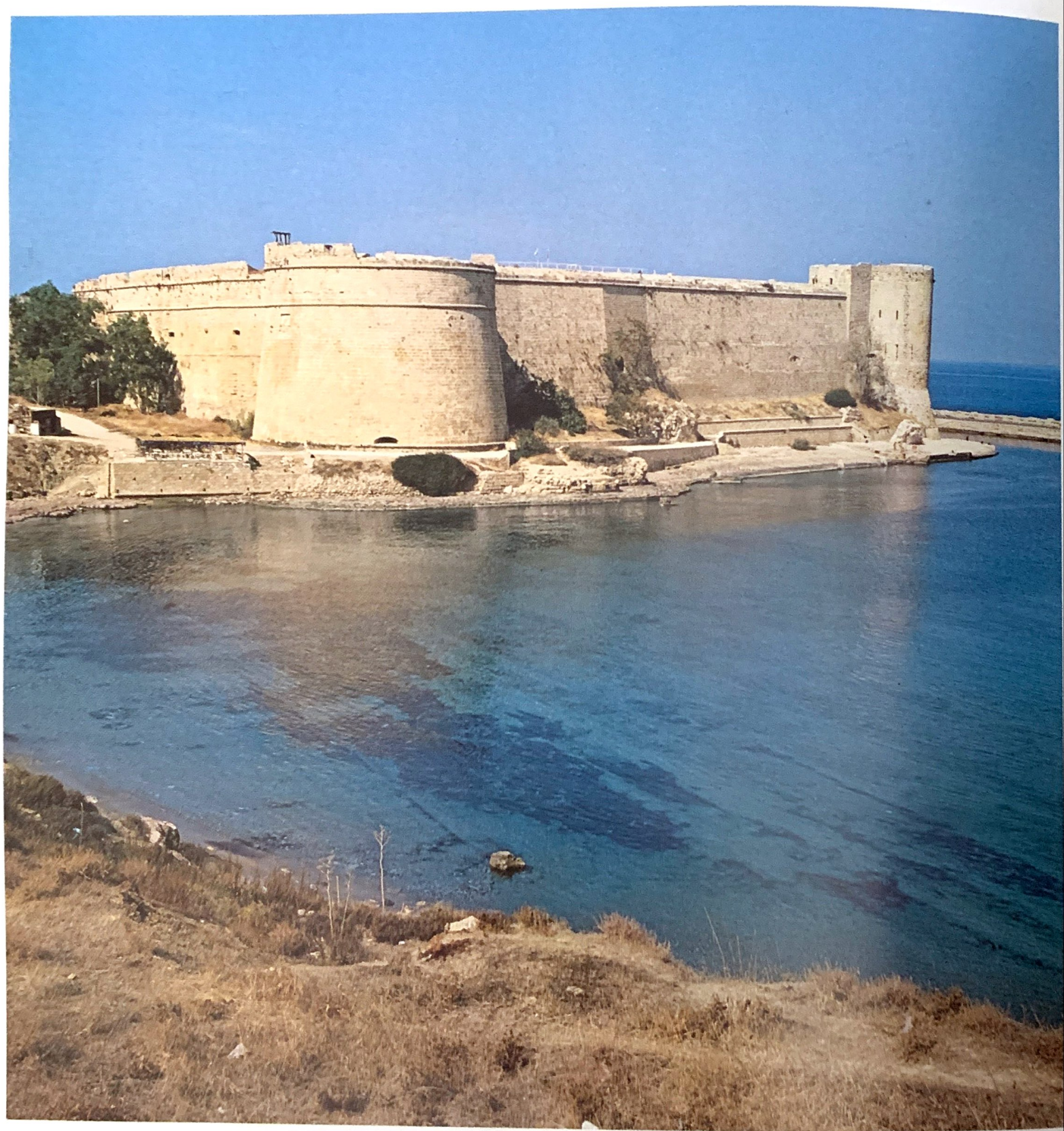
Kyrenia Castle. The Byzantine construction was enlarged during the time of the Lusignans and modernised for artillery warfare by the Venetians. It played an important part in the civil war between Charlotte and her brother James

Kantara castle. Originally Byzantine, it was enlarged and strengthened by the Lusignans as the main defence of the north-east of Cyprus



















quarters rather than as a significant contribution to the island's defences. After the Genoese seizure of Famagusta, the Lusignans built a fortress at Sigouri as a deterrent against raids in the direction of Nicosia, but little now remains. Scattered around the countryside were fortified watch-towers, of which those at Pyla, Kiti (apparently dating from the sixteenth century) and Alaminos survive.

Not many non-military secular buildings associated with the Lusignans remain. At Famagusta the ruins of the royal palace lie behind a sixteenth-century Venetian façade, while at Nicosia the vestiges of what is believed to have been the royal palace were demolished in the early twentieth century. A window of presumably fourteenth-century date from this building has been re-erected in the Lapidary Museum in Nicosia. At Kouklia (Palea-Paphos) there is a royal manor house together with the remains of other buildings associated with the important local sugar industry, and there is also a sugar press and an aqueduct which would have supplied water-power to work it at the Hospitaller property at Kolossi.

At Nicosia and Famagusta the former Latin cathedrals survive as mosques. The cathedral church of St. Sophia at Nicosia is of mostly thirteenth-century construction; that of St. Nicholas at Famagusta dates to the early part of the fourteenth century. Compared with the great cathedrals of Europe, Famagusta Cathedral is small, but its designs nevertheless shows that the architects and masons were well acquainted with contemporary developments in the West. Famagusta contains a large number of other churches in varying stages of ruin and decay. Almost all would appear to date from the first half of the fourteenth century, the period of greatest prosperity, and many, notably St. George of the Latins and SS. Peter and Paul, were buildings of considerable beauty and opulence. The Orthodox cathedral of St. George, a building totally western in its architectural style, also dates from this era.

Away from Nicosia and Famagusta, the most important Latin church-complex to have survived is the former Premonstratensian abbey of Bellapais near Kyrenia. The church itself is evidently of thirteenth-century date, while the conventual buildings belong to the fourteenth. As would be expected in an

*Opposite*  
Kantara Castle; from  
south-west



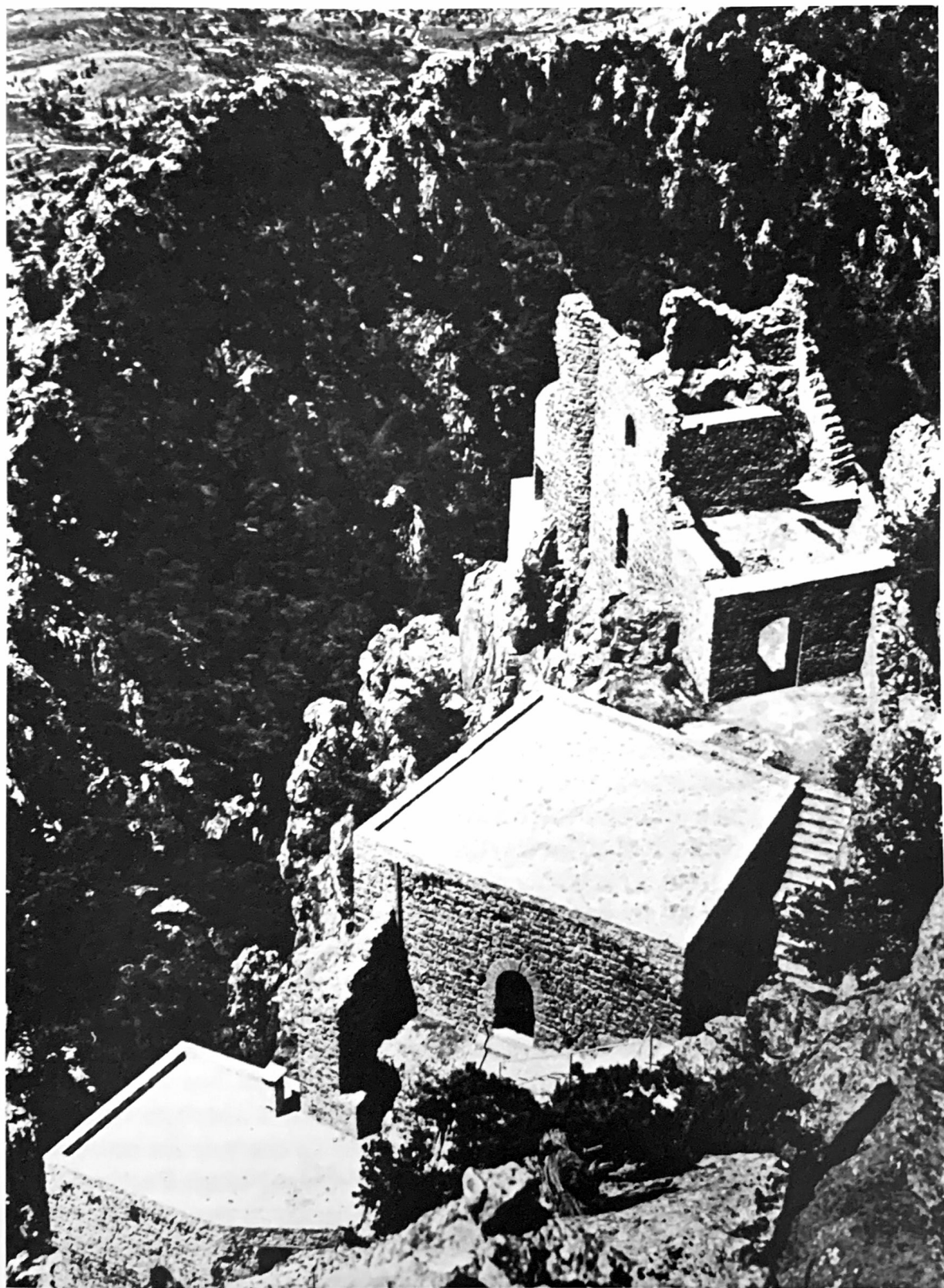
abbey which enjoyed royal and aristocratic patronage, the building is imposing, and its site on an eminence overlooking the sea serves to enhance its magnificence.

Churches built after the mid-fourteenth century seem impoverished and provincial in style by comparison with what had gone before. This development, which suggests that Cyprus was less attuned to the mainstream of European trends, can be attributed to the general decline in prosperity and the invasions by the Genoese and Egyptians. A good example of this later architecture is provided by the church of St. Nicholas in Nicosia, which dates from the fifteenth century and which shows a curious amalgam of architectural influences. In the later Middle Ages the Orthodox community in Cyprus frequently adopted architectural details from the Latins, as for example at the monastery of Ayia Napa in the south-eastern corner of the island.

The western establishment of nobles and clergy formed only a very small part of Cypriot society. The overwhelming majority of the population was Greek and most derived their livelihood from the land. What happened to the former Greek landowners at the inception of Lusignan rule is obscure. Some may have fled while others presumably sank in the social hierarchy. Certainly the Greek landowning class did not survive the Latin take-over as it did in much of Greece after the Fourth Crusade; still less was it able to mount a prolonged resistance to western rule as did the Cretan *archontes* in the thirteenth century. But why this should be remains a mystery.

In the countryside the cultivated land was, as in the West, divided between the seigneurial demesne (perhaps a third of the total) and the peasants' own holdings. This division stands in marked contrast to the conditions which had prevailed in the Kingdom of Jerusalem where seigneurial demesne was uncommon. The landlords also enjoyed monopolies over such profitable undertakings as bakehouses, wine and olive presses and sugar mills. There were two main types of peasant. The freemen (*francomati*) paid a rent equivalent to about a quarter of their produce. The serfs (*paroikoi*) owed their lord a third of

*Opposite*  
Buffavento Castle. In an  
almost inaccessible  
mountain position, it  
was used mainly as a  
state prison



their produce and were obliged to perform labour services on the demesne two days each week. In addition they were subjected to a number of legal disabilities. They were forbidden to leave their land, but they could be transferred to other lands belonging to their lord if he so wished. By the fifteenth century, when statistics become available, freemen outnumbered serfs. Earlier it would seem that the opposite may have been true, and it may well be that, as in the West, one consequence of the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century and the subsequent decline in population was the decline of serfdom.

One effect of the disappearance of the Greek landowning class was the impoverishment of the Greek Church. The class which should have acted as patrons and benefactors was no more, and not surprisingly there are comparatively few examples of Greek church-building or decoration in the first two centuries of Latin rule. How far the Latins actually sequestrated Greek ecclesiastical endowments after the conquest is not clear, but the likelihood is that the losses were considerable. A number of Greek monasteries survived, although the Benedictines took over the most famous foundation in the island, the monastery of Stavrovouni. It is important to realise that the Latins in Cyprus did not — at least officially — regard the Greeks as schismatics. They were a part of the Universal Church and so had to be fitted into the new ecclesiastical structure of the Kingdom. At the time of the conquest there had been fourteen bishoprics in the island, but, beginning in the 1220s, a new order was imposed which reduced the number to four, coinciding with the four Latin dioceses. In theory each Latin bishop now had a Greek assistant bishop. In practice the Greek bishops and their clergy were left to get on with the job of shepherding their flock, comprising the vast majority of the population, with only spasmodic Latin supervision. The Greeks resented the changes and the subordination they entailed, but the system worked.

It was in the interests of the secular authorities to prevent Latin churchmen antagonising the Greek population, and so zealous ecclesiastics from the West such as Hugh Fagiano in the mid-thirteenth century or Peter Thomas in the mid-fourteenth who tried to force the Greeks to adopt western practices lacked governmental support. It is no doubt significant that the only



case of Greeks suffering martyrdom at the hands of the Latins for their persistence in maintaining their traditions occurred in about 1230 at a time when royal authority was undermined by civil war. Similarly, the Latin Church was not allowed to impinge on the everyday life of the Greeks. Thus whereas tithes were due to the Latin bishops from the crown and the nobility on the produce of their demesne, and on the rents and payments in kind they received from the peasantry, the peasants themselves did not pay tithes to the Latin clergy who had therefore to be content with a tenth of the landlords' income and not a tenth of the total produce of the soil. The perennial antagonism which would have been caused by making the Greeks pay tithes direct to an alien ecclesiastical establishment was thereby avoided. Perhaps symbolic of the fact that the Lusignans' religious policy did not push their Greek subjects into embittered opposition is the fact that when in the fourteenth century the Greeks of Famagusta came to rebuild their cathedral, they erected a building in the western Gothic style and not in their own Orthodox Byzantine tradition.

The countryside was almost entirely inhabited by Greeks. There is no reason to suppose that the Lusignans established agricultural settlements peopled by immigrants from western Europe in Cyprus as had existed in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in the twelfth century. However, the existence of villages with names such as Syrianokhori and Armenokhori indicates that at some time, most probably during the century before the beginning of the Lusignan regime, there had been immigration or perhaps forcible resettlement in Cyprus of Syrian and Armenian Christians from the mainland coasts opposite the island. But although we find Syrians employed on sugar plantations and the occasional Syrian artisan in the countryside, positive evidence for the survival of such ethnic minorities in the rural areas into the Lusignan period is lacking.

The towns, and in particular Famagusta and Nicosia, were extremely cosmopolitan. Professor Richard has concluded that Famagusta, which superseded Limassol as the principal port in the island sometime during the thirteenth century, was essentially a Syrian town with the Greek population in a decided minority. These Syrians were in origin Arabic-speaking Christian Melkites, Nestorians, Maronites or Jacobites from the

mainland. They had come to live in Cyprus either as merchants trading with the ports around the eastern Mediterranean or as refugees from the Christian cities in Syria and the Holy Land as they fell to the Moslems in the late thirteenth century. Indeed, after the fall of Acre in 1291, large numbers crowded into Famagusta at precisely the moment that that city entered its period of great prosperity. The Syrians evidently constituted an important segment of the urban artisan class, and some of those who engaged in commerce prospered enormously. The historian Leontios Machaeras tells of the Nestorian Lakha brothers whose riches in the years before the Genoese seizure of Famagusta in 1373 were proverbial and of Thibaut Abu'l Farag, a Melkite, who was able to raise a company of mercenaries from his own pocket. The Syrians and Armenians had their own churches and clergy. They turn up as civil servants and soldiers and provided men for the force of light cavalry known as Turcoples. In Famagusta and Nicosia there were also communities of Jews who in the sixteenth century (when their quarter in Famagusta can be located in the southern part of the town) seem to have been drawn from various parts of the Mediterranean world.

It was in the towns also that most of the western, Catholic population of Cyprus lived. Most nobles had houses in Nicosia, although, unlike their counterparts in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, they also maintained residences on their estates to which they could retire to indulge their passion for falconry and the chase. There was also a significant class of Latin burgesses. Some, like the first nobles, came to Cyprus at the beginning of the Lusignan period from the Holy Land. Others were among the refugees from the Moslem conquests of the later thirteenth century. Yet others were merchants from the West who based their activities in the island and settled permanently. So there was in the towns a Catholic community of merchants, artisans, clergy and government officials existing side by side with similar communities of Syrians and Greeks. In the course of time intermarriage and the adoption of a common language came to blur the distinctions between them. Indeed, from the fifteenth century there is evidence for a *lingua franca* in which Greek, Italian and French words were used indiscriminately.

The western merchants were another significant element in



the towns. Traders from the West had been visiting Cyprus since the time of the First Crusade, if not earlier. In the 1120s the Byzantine emperor had extended the trading privileges granted to the Venetians to include the island. Under the Lusignans western mercantile communities acquired extensive rights: tariff reductions, rights of jurisdiction over their own nationals, rights to own property and government guarantees of safety and protection. The first major maritime republic to be given a privilege was Genoa in 1218. Marseilles followed in 1236; Pisa and Barcelona both in 1291, and Venice, rather surprisingly, not until 1306, although in the case of Venice it is possible that some of the rights granted by the Byzantines continued to be enjoyed after the Lusignan settlement. These grants were intended to encourage the merchants to come and do business. When the fleets arrived, the ports would be thronged with merchants and mariners, staying perhaps only a few days or weeks. Other merchants stayed longer, acting as agents for their companies, or, like Francesco Balducci Pegolotti who was in Cyprus in the 1330s as the agent of the Florentine banking house of Bardi, engaged in other business activities. With the merchants came notaries such as the Genoese Lamberto di Sambuceto who was in Cyprus in the years around 1300 and whose surviving registers testify to the vigour and variety of the commercial life of Famagusta at that period.

Exercising jurisdiction over the privileged western mercantile communities and representing their interests with the government were magistrates appointed by their home states. Disputes with the Cypriot authorities were common. The precise interpretation of the privileges gave rise to long wrangles. Individual cases of piracy or wreck could sour relations. Who exactly were entitled to enjoy the benefits of the privileges was a frequent bone of contention. Merchants from one city might try to pass themselves off as citizens of another in order to take advantage of that city's trading status. The Genoese and Venetians both claimed as citizens of their respective republics the inhabitants of their various colonies scattered around the Aegean and Black Sea as well as the descendants of the inhabitants of their quarters in Acre and the other ports of Syria and Palestine. These people, often Syrians or Byzantine Greeks with no direct association

with Genoa or Venice, were known as 'White Genoese' or 'White Venetians'. Because Jubayl in the crusader County of Tripoli (in present-day Lebanon) had had men of Genoese origin as its lords, the Genoese claimed all those families who had come from there as refugees and now lived in Cyprus as their own citizens, entitled to enjoy their commercial advantages and subject to their legal jurisdiction. What this meant in practice was that a section of the Syrian population — the 'White' Genoese and Venetians — escaped the jurisdiction of the Cypriot courts. The intractable legal tangles which would have arisen to infuriate both the authorities and the other parties in any litigation must have been considerable.

Such problems would probably not have amounted to very much were it not for the fact that for a substantial period Cyprus enjoyed enormous prosperity. The island produced grain, salt, olive-oil, wine, sugar, cotton and cloth for export, and there is plenty of evidence for a vigorous trade in these commodities. But there has always been the danger that drought can lead to failure of the harvests, and there must have been years when Cyprus was a net importer of these things. In fact, the commercial prosperity of Cyprus was based more on the island's position on the international trade routes than on the sale of its own produce.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries merchants from the West had come to the ports of the Holy Land, most notably Acre, in search of Asiatic spices, dyestuffs, cloths, precious stones, drugs and other products for which the crusades had helped stimulate demand in Europe. But with the fall of Acre in 1291 and papal embargoes on European merchants trading direct with Moslems, Famagusta came to occupy a key position on the East-West trade routes. The local merchants — many of them Greeks or Nestorians — shipped the merchandise from various ports along the coast of Syria to Famagusta where it was bought by Italian, French and Catalan merchants and the tariffs and other levies that the Cypriot government imposed on trade meant that Cyprus enjoyed a share of the wealth generated by this commerce. Famagusta boomed, and from the late thirteenth century until the third quarter of the fourteenth it enjoyed a

*Opposite*  
Limassol Castle was built on the site of Byzantine fortifications. Richard I of England and Berengaria were married there. The present building dates originally from the early fourteenth century; it was reconstructed in the fourteenth century and later by the Venetians











prosperity unparalleled in its history. Visible reminders of this prosperity remain in the numerous medieval churches, chief among them the cathedral of St. Nicholas, dating from the fourteenth century, which survive in Famagusta.

The kings of Cyprus attempted to make Famagusta the staple through which all the international trade passed. There is some evidence that they ordered trade to be concentrated there — in any case Famagusta has the best natural harbour in the island — and in the late thirteenth century and the first three decades of the fourteenth they tried policing the seas in order to prevent illicit trade by western merchants with the Moslems. But Famagusta's monopoly was at its best only partial, and towards the middle of the fourteenth century it came to be undermined by a shift in the pattern of trade. It may be that a larger proportion of the East-West trade was being shipped through the Black Sea. It is certainly true that from the 1320s the effect of the papal embargoes on trade with Moslems began to be reduced and from the mid-1340s we find the Venetian Senate sending galleys regularly to the Egyptian port of Alexandria. Indeed, it has been claimed that King Peter I's sack of Alexandria in 1365 was more an attempt to destroy a rival commercial entrepôt than a serious effort to regain the Holy Land for Christendom.

Two other factors contributed to the destruction of Famagusta's period of greatness. The Black Death of 1348 hit Cyprus hard. We do not have statistics for the island, but there is no reason to suppose that the effects there were any different from those in the West, where between a quarter and a third of the population died. But with fewer people in the West, the demand for eastern products fell, and with the fall in demand the turnover and the profits declined so that commercial centres such as Famagusta went into depression. Then in 1373 Famagusta was seized by the Genoese as the culmination of a long history of bad relations between Genoa and the Lusignans. The war with Genoa was damaging in many respects. The looting and destruction meant that many local merchants lost their business capital. The very fact of Genoese occupation was sufficient in itself to drive away merchants of other nationalities. By the 1390s travellers report that the city had taken on the appearance of a ghost town — an appearance it retains to this day.

*Opposite*  
Paphos Harbour Castle. Although it incorporates some fragments of a previous building, the castle in its present form is of the Venetian and Turkish periods

The Genoese were to hold Famagusta until 1464 when King James II expelled them. In the ninety years which intervened, the regime, deprived of its best port, with the Kingdom under tribute to the Genoese and with the commercial heyday a mere memory, struggled on as best as it could. Somehow it managed to survive the Egyptian invasions of the 1420s. It was a period in which the old order dominated by a French crusader nobility and a Catholic hierarchy gave way to a cosmopolitan Mediterranean society of which James, the son of a Lusignan king and his Greek mistress and dependent on an amalgam of Cypriots, Italians and Catalans for his support, can be regarded as representative. James was an able and forceful man who understood political realities, and with the recovery of Famagusta he was able to inspire confidence in his rule. In seeking a wife he turned to the one Christian political power of any consequence in the east Mediterranean that could offer hope in the face of Ottoman Turkish expansion. When Caterina Cornaro set sail from Venice in 1472 the prospects for Cyprus must have seemed brighter than for a very long time. It was not for her to know that her presence there was to mark the *fin du siècle*.



# CATERINA CORNARO AND THE THRONE OF CYPRUS

Joachim G. Joachim

Caterina Cornaro, the last Queen of Cyprus, came from an ancient Venetian family which had close connections with Cyprus and the Greek world of the Aegean. Her father, Mark Cornaro, was a Venetian aristocrat who had extensive commercial interests in the Levant. Because of his long experience of the East, Venice often used his services on diplomatic missions and other important affairs of state. The Cornaros claimed descent from the *gens Cornelia* of ancient Rome and Caterina habitually appended the patronymic *Cornelii* to her other names. Originally from Padua, the family moved to Venice during the first centuries of the Venetian Republic. Gradually it gained wealth and influence and produced doges, members of the Senate, procurators, captains-general and ambassadors. The family were also well represented in the hierarchy of the Church, no less than nine of them becoming cardinals. Caterina's mother, Donna Fiorenza, was a Greek princess who could claim imperial lineage through her grandfather, John Comnenus, Emperor of Trebizond. Fiorenza, through her dowry, added many estates in the Archipelago to the already substantial Cornaro possessions.

Caterina was born in one of the family palaces on the Grand Canal on St. Catherine's Day in 1454 at the height of the power and prosperity of the Serene Republic. It took several centuries of cunning diplomacy, ruthless conquest and shrewd financial enterprise to build the Venetian Empire. By the fifteenth century Venice had grown from a cluster of obscure fishing villages in the lagoons of the north-western Adriatic into a thriving city-state and a major naval power in the Mediterranean. The rise of the Republic was often at the expense of Constantinople. As the Greek Empire of the East declined, the more did the fortunes of the Latins of the West flourish. The destiny of Venice especially was closely linked with the Greek world of the eastern Mediterranean.

The first dealings between the Venetians and Constantinople took place in the sixth century, when they went to the aid of Belisarius and Narses, the generals of Justinian, in his wars against the Ostrogoths. In A.D. 810 the Emperor Nicephorus signed a treaty with Charlemagne in which the latter recognised Venice as Byzantine territory and allowed her trading rights with the mainland. This treaty saved the Venetians when the rest of the Byzantine possessions in north Italy were annexed by Charlemagne and the Pope. By the end of the first Christian millennium Venice controlled the route to the Holy Land and the Doge, in a symbolic wedding, 'espoused the everlasting sea'. In 1043 work began on the construction of the basilica of St. Mark, the most celebrated example of Byzantine architecture in the West. The first three crusades provided Venice with a golden opportunity to extend her trading rights to several key ports in the Levant and to establish the power of a wealthy oligarchy at home. In 1126 the Byzantine Emperor extended Venetian trading privileges to include Cyprus. Further special trading concessions were granted to Venice in 1306. However all Venetian attempts to gain control of the eastern Mediterranean were checked by the presence of the Byzantines in the East. As Carthage had to be destroyed to allow Rome to rule the world, so Constantinople *delenda erat* if Venice was to rule the waves. The malevolent envy of the Republic towards the Greek Empire was given vent in 1204 when the Venetians led the covetous knights of the Fourth Crusade to the Golden Horn, there to sack and



plunder the great city and carry across the sea its fabulous treasures. From this conquest Venice also acquired Negroponte (Euboea), Candia (Crete), the ports of Coron and Modon and the Cyclades. The Latin Empire of the East was called Romania and a Venetian, Morosini, replaced the Greek Patriarch at Constantinople. Fifty-seven years later, in 1261, the Greeks succeeded in retaking Constantinople and expelled the Franks, but Venice retained most of her other eastern possessions.

In 1453 the year before Caterina Cornaro was born, Constantinople finally succumbed to the crushing onslaught of the Ottoman Turks. The principal rival of the Venetian Republic thus vanished forever from the world stage, and although some Venetians did participate in the defence of the beleaguered city there was secret rejoicing in the councils of Venice when the news arrived. The Turks pressed on with their conquests in Greece and Albania, isolating the Venetian possessions. Venice, still in control of the seas, took over the task of containing the Turkish colossus. All the sophisticated statecraft of the Signory was directed towards the domination of the Levant and the monopolising of the trade routes along which the riches of Asia and Arabia flowed into Europe.

Within that general design the acquisition of Cyprus was gradually becoming imperative strategically and desirable commercially. It was the fate of Caterina Cornaro, born at that moment in history, to play a crucial role in the fulfilment of the ambitions of her native land. She was, in truth, only a pawn, an innocent participant in and victim of the ruthless, dispassionate logic of the Signory. Through her Cyprus became a Venetian territory and Venice held back the rising tide of the Ottoman Empire and retained control of the eastern sea lanes for almost another century.

Venice was ruled by an oligarchy of wealthy merchant families. Supreme power in the state was formally in the hands of the Council, the members of which formed a patrician caste. More important was the Senate, a deliberative and legislative body which dealt with foreign affairs, finance and trade. However, in times of emergency, the decisions of the Senate could be

overridden by the Department of War. The *Collegio* or Cabinet was responsible for administration. At the apex of the government was the Doge and his Council. A sinister division of this was the Council of Ten, the secret committee for public safety, which was concerned with morals and conspiracy. Anonymous denunciations of prominent citizens were encouraged and political assassination as a carefully cultivated art was regularly and effectively practised by the State. The Council of Ten kept on their payroll a master poisoner whose task it was to rid the Republic of all persons, at home or abroad, who were perceived as standing in the way of the aggrandisement of Venice. In addition the government often put under contract freelance professional poisoners who would, at a price, discreetly dispose of an unwanted individual with no embarrassment to the Republic.

Capitalism and imperialism were the two major forces behind the ambitions of Venice in the fifteenth century. Her citizens were practical and conservative, preoccupied with commerce and the building of their maritime empire, anxious about the Turkish advances in the Near East and, to a lesser degree, about the competition from Genoa and Naples and the other Italian cities. The Renaissance came later to Venice than to other Italian cities; the new invention of printing, however, was encouraged by the Senate by official decree in 1469 because of its practical applications. Everywhere the wealth and power of the Venetians were in evidence. The prosperous merchants of the Rialto, clothed in furs and velvets, built splendid palaces along the majestic ribbon of the Grand Canal, which opened to the Lido and the trading world beyond. Venetian galleys anchored in the Bacino and sailed the seas under the banner of the Lion of St. Mark, guarding the Gulf, which was the name the Venetians gave to the Adriatic, and ready to sail anywhere at a moment's notice to protect the wide interests of the Serene Republic. A regular sea route ran from Venice to Ragusa, to Corfu, to Modon, to Candia, to Rhodes and on to Cyprus and the coasts of the Levant; or, after rounding Cape Malea, to Naxos and Andros and thence to the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. Particularly important was the third route, to Alexandria, for Venetian trade with Egypt was very valuable. The merchant ships brought



spices, camlets, brocades of gold and silver, sugar, salt, wheat, precious stones.

Caterina, as the daughter of an ancient family, was brought up according to tradition. Young girls of high birth dressed very simply and were not permitted to wear any ornaments except, perhaps, a small cross on a chain of gold or silver. When they went out, usually no farther than their parish church for Mass or confession, they were covered from head to foot in a long white *fazzuolo*. Their lives were sheltered and they could never stir without a trusted, faithful nurse to chaperone and escort them through the narrow *calli* of their neighbourhood. The fierce jealousy of the Moor of Venice would have been considered natural by the Venetians, who kept their women in almost oriental seclusion. So suspicious of all strangers were the fathers of unmarried daughters that they did not even allow teachers of music, dancing or languages to enter their *palazzi* — such refinements had to wait until after the girls were married and were able to employ their own teachers and household retainers. As married women, they appeared in public at church festivals, at state functions, and at the glittering balls and entertainments given from time to time by the Doge and other high officials. On such occasions, Venetian ladies of rank, dressed in sumptuous dresses and ablaze with jewels, equalled in splendour the wealthy and sophisticated courtesans.

Caterina was sent at the age of ten to be educated at the Benedictine convent of St. Ursula in Padua, where she was followed by her younger sisters. She had five sisters whose names were Violante, Cornelia, Marietta, Bianca and Lucia. She also had two brothers, Luke who figures later in the story as an unsuccessful suitor for the hand of a rich widow in Cyprus, and George, who was to be highly honoured by the Republic for his part in her abdication and the subsequent acquisition of the island by Venice.

When Caterina arrived in Cyprus in 1472 to marry James II she was eighteen years old and according to her contemporaries was an outstanding beauty. Of medium height, she was curvaceous in a pleasing Renaissance way, with brilliant dark eyes and

a rosy complexion. Her loosely-curved tresses were bleached by the sun of her native land to a deep reddish-gold. She was gentle and vivacious, 'bella donna', as Sanudo the Venetian chronicler said of her.

Cyprus was to prove no peaceful haven for Caterina. Since the first quarter of the fifteenth century the small Frankish island kingdom had been struggling desperately for survival against the waves of Moslem fanaticism that followed the crusades. Once again the island fell within the orbit of the superpowers of the Near East. In 1426, the Mamelukes of Egypt invaded Cyprus and, in a decisive battle at Khirokitia on 7 July of that year, defeated the Lusignan King Janus, sacked Nicosia, and carried the King captive to Egypt, where he was paraded through the streets of Cairo, on a mule and in chains, before being cast into prison together with many of his knights. Ten months later, Janus was set free on payment of a large ransom, after recognising the suzerainty of the Sultan of Egypt and undertaking to pay a heavy yearly tribute. During the King's absence the Greek serfs of the island, the *paroikoi*, rose up in revolt, pillaged the houses and estates of the rich landowners, appointed captains in four villages and a fifth in the town of Limassol and, at Lefkoniko, nominated a certain Alexis as their king. This people's army was put down with great severity and, on 12 May 1427, 'Re Alexis' was hanged in Nicosia. That same day, the ship bringing Janus back from Egypt was sighted off the coast of Paphos. Waiting on the quay to welcome the King home from his captivity was his son, Prince John, then a boy of nine.

And so the independence of the Frankish Kingdom of Cyprus came to an end. Five years later, King Janus died heartbroken, a vassal of the Sultan of Egypt. He was succeeded by his son, who was crowned on 24 August 1432 in St. Sophia in Nicosia as John II, King of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia. The new King was an indolent sybarite, who was also, according to his contemporary, Pope Pius II, 'cowardly and vile in spirit, though handsome to look at,' who 'lived a life of sloth, gluttony and lust,' easily led and dominated by the women around him, indeed 'though a man, more corrupt than a woman.' On 3 July 1440



John married his first wife, Medea, daughter of the Marquis of Montferrat, by descent a Paleologos. When she arrived in Cyprus Medea was chagrined to discover that her future husband had a beautiful mistress, of Greek blood like herself, Marietta of Patras. John was much attached to Marietta, who at that time was either expecting or had just given birth to his child. Illegitimate children could sometimes successfully claim the succession. Legend has it that, in an outburst of jealous rage, Medea bit off Marietta's nose, in order to disfigure the face that held the amorous King in thrall. For the rest of her long life the unfortunate Marietta was known as *comomutena* or crop-nosed. Medea died only ten weeks after her marriage, either because of the bad climate or because of poison which was the allegation favoured by Pius II. Many other chroniclers also suspected foul play. It is interesting to note that most of the members of Medea's train died at the same time. Marietta's brother, Markios of Patras, was well established on the island and, no doubt, he hoped to benefit from his sister's association with the King. Did the party of the mutilated Marietta take their revenge? There must be some doubt, because the Cypriot chroniclers, Florio Bustron and Stephen of Lusignan assert that it was Queen Helena, John's second wife who assaulted his mistress.

James the Bastard, the son of John II and his mistress Marietta, the future husband of Caterina Cornaro, was born probably in 1439. He turned out to be in every respect a remarkable man. Until he reached school age he was brought up by his mother. The good-looking son of two strikingly handsome parents, he was often called 'a beautiful boy' — 'come bon fiol'. At school, James was more interested in riding, fencing and athletics than in books. High-spirited, robust and tireless, there was no bow he could not bend or horse he could not tame. He bullied his schoolfellows and beat up even the older boys. He had a choleric, impulsive temperament and he was easily moved to violence. It was said of him that he could never rest before he had avenged a slight, real or imagined. The common people loved and admired him, calling him *o Yiakoumos* — Big James. According to Florio Bustron: 'He acted in such a way that he won the respect of the

whole city; and some, seeing his lofty spirit, began to wonder what might be the full extent of his ambition.'

As he grew up James's popularity pleased his father exceedingly, but it did not endear him to John's second wife, Helena Paleologa or Paleologina, a self-willed Byzantine princess whom the King had married on 3 February 1442. Helena was the daughter of Theodore II Paleologos, Despot of the Morea, son of Emperor Manuel II (1391-1425). Although she suffered from chronic ill health, Helena had a will of iron, unbounded ambition and few scruples. She despised the Franks as barbarians and detested the Western Church and all Catholics. She was shrewish, scheming and resourceful. Not surprisingly, the Latin chroniclers had no love for Helena, whom they describe as treacherous, wily, malicious and a formidable virago. According to Pius II she was '*ingeniosa et cordata mulier, verum Graeca instituta perfidia, Latinis inimica sacris et Romanae hostis ecclesiae*' — 'a clever and spirited woman, an adept in Greek treachery, an enemy of the Latin religion and hostile to the Church of Rome.' After her marriage it did not take long for Helena to realise the essential weakness of her husband's character and to take the reins of government firmly into her own hands. As Pius II wrote, she acted not as a queen but as a king and ruled the Kingdom herself, dismissing former officials and appointing new ones. By skilful political manoeuvres, Helena was formally recognised by the High Court as Regent of the Kingdom, even though the King was still alive. Bartholomew da Levanto, Captain of Famagusta, which then belonged to Genoa, writing to the Protectors of the Bank of St. George in 1455, described Helena thus: 'This Kingdom is ruled by the Queen who is like a devil, a Greek woman of the worst sort.' Lusignan, the historian, wrote that Queen Helena was 'a cunning woman, subtle and malicious.'

Helena was grieved and angered to see her co-nationals, the Greek Orthodox population of the island, enslaved by the Frankish nobility and suppressed and exploited by the Catholic clergy. Her avowed object was to improve the conditions under which the native Cypriots lived by curbing the power of the foreign nobility and putting an end to the Latin domination over the Church of Cyprus. Before the fall of Constantinople in 1453



Helena had aspired to reunite Cyprus with the Byzantine Empire. The destruction of the Empire and the heroic death of her uncle, the last Emperor, Constantine XI (1448-1453) must have been a shattering blow to so passionate a supporter of the Greek cause as Queen Helena Paleologina of Cyprus. Cyprus then became a haven for the displaced Byzantine nobility and Helena spent the remaining five years of her life planning revenge and nurturing the dream of the resurrection of the Empire. The first sign of success of the Queen's Hellenic policy was the extensive use of the Greek-Cypriot dialect in the administration, together with French, the language of the nobility. The Queen spoke Greek on principle and brought up her daughter to do the same. Greek was no longer the despised tongue of the subject race; it now became the language of the King's court and of diplomacy. When, on 7 September 1450, John II and the Emir of Scandalore concluded a treaty, the document was written — perhaps for the first time in the chronicles of the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus — in the Greek dialect.

Helena Paleologina became the champion of the Greek Orthodox clergy on the island in their resistance to the designs of the papacy. According to Pius II, 'she regulated church appointments on her own authority, and, doing away with the Latin rite, replaced it with the Greek.' The Greek Orthodox Church of the eastern Mediterranean and the Roman Catholic Church of the West had been drifting apart for many centuries. After the schism of 1054 the Catholic policy aimed at reuniting the two Churches under the authority of the Pope and forcing the Greek inhabitants of the Frankish-dominated lands of the eastern Mediterranean to submit to Rome.

The Union proclaimed at the Council of Florence (1439-1442) was the most notable attempt to reunite the two Churches. It was only an illusory reunion, since the Greek Church immediately denounced it as the product of fraud and subterfuge on the part of the Latins. The papacy, however, was determined to make the best of the situation and Pope Nicholas V, on appointing Archbishop Andrew of Rhodes to the vacant Archbishopric of Nicosia in 1447, instructed him to make certain that all the Greek inhabitants observed the canons of the Council.

Although in the eyes of Rome Andrew remained Archbishop of Nicosia until his death in 1456, when Rome appointed a successor who also never took up residence, the King in 1453 requested from Pope Nicholas V his agreement to the nomination of his illegitimate son James, then a boy of about thirteen; and though papal assent was never received he put him in possession of the revenues of the See and of the archiepiscopal palace. This move was presumably inspired by Queen Helena. James was nominally a Catholic, but he had been brought up by Marietta, his Greek Orthodox mother, and felt himself more of a Cypriot than a Catholic Frank. As Helena had expected, John II, who doted on James, was only too pleased to appoint him. This scheme had the advantage of eliminating James as a probable successor to the Lusignan crown and, Helena, well knowing her husband's affection for his bastard son, realised that putting James forward for this high appointment was the best way to range the Catholic King John on her side against the designs of the papacy in Cyprus.

The young James did not oppose this nomination, which put into his hands considerable power and substantial revenues. As a prelude to his appointment as Archbishop of Nicosia, James duly received the lower ordinations and was henceforth referred to as 'postulatus Archiepiscopus' or Archbishop-Designate. The Latins called him 'postulato' which the Greek populace promptly turned into *Apostoles*, a common Greek Christian name deriving from the word *apostolos* or apostle. James, for his part, enjoyed his new status and moved into the vacant archiepiscopal palace in some state, accompanied by his mother. According to contemporary reports, the black cassock which he enthusiastically adopted enhanced dramatically his youthful good looks.

Queen Helena's only surviving child was Charlotte, three or four years younger than her half-brother James. The Princess Charlotte, or Carlotta, as she was called by her contemporaries, was the legitimate heir of John II. Charlotte was destined to become the life-long rival of Caterina Cornaro in a bitter struggle for the crown of Cyprus. She was a tragic figure. She had many adherents among the nobility and many a great family threw in their lot with her. In the end Charlotte and her party were no match for the Venetian Republic and its Machiavellian



designs. Caterina won the day, only to be ousted in her turn by her perfidious parent by adoption. The victor was the more attractive of the two women, more beautiful and more romantic. Charlotte, pale of complexion and small of stature, although she bore herself with regal dignity, does not seem to have possessed much personal attraction. Her character was strong and determined, a quality she must have inherited from her mother. Queen Helena had instilled into Charlotte the one overriding fact of the legitimacy of her claim to the throne, and this Charlotte never forgot, fighting for it courageously until her death at the age of forty-four in Rome in 1487. But, in her pursuit of power, Charlotte did not adhere to her mother's Greek loyalties and Orthodox policies. Although she never achieved fluency in French, Italian or Latin, and spoke Greek as her first language in 'a torrential manner', Charlotte associated herself with the Catholic party and was always ready to listen to the counsels of her father during his lifetime and later of those Frankish nobles who supported her claims. At first Charlotte was very friendly with her illegitimate half-brother James, but soon political intrigues caused a rift between them and forced them into two opposing political camps, Charlotte into the Catholic Frankish faction, and James onto the side inspired by a greater feeling for Cypriot national solidarity. Charlotte's strength derived from her rights as the legitimate heir to the Lusignan King John II. James's strength derived from his charm and resoluteness; he was distinguished both as a skilful diplomat and as an inspiring leader of men. It must have been distressing for Queen Helena, the autocratic Byzantine Princess, to see Charlotte being adopted by the Catholic party of the island and reducing to a mockery Helena's pro-Greek and pro-Orthodox domestic policies.

In 1456, Charlotte married Prince John, Duke of Coimbra, grandson to the King of Portugal. To Helena's dismay, Prince John turned out to be an ardent Catholic and an opponent of her own pro-Orthodox policies. He succeeded in replacing Helena as Regent and proceeded to depose many of the officials whom she had promoted to key positions. Eventually the influence of the

Portuguese Prince became too much for Helena to endure. Thomas, a Greek from the Morea, the son of Helena's nurse and foster-mother, whom the King had knighted and appointed to the office of Chamberlain of Cyprus at the behest of the Queen, accused Prince John of the murder of a Cypriot nobleman. The friends and relatives of the murdered man stormed the palace in order to find the Prince and confront him with the accusation. He was absent, but two of his men were killed in a scuffle. After this abortive attempt to get rid of the Prince, Thomas fled to Famagusta, which was held by the Genoese, who had strongly promoted a rival candidate for Charlotte's hand in the person of Louis of Savoy. However, Prince John did not escape Helena's machinations, dying soon afterwards, poisoned, as it was rumoured, by Thomas's mother, the nurse and confidante of the Queen. His marriage to Charlotte was childless.

In the summer of 1457, after the death of Prince John of Coimbra, Thomas, the Chamberlain, returned to Nicosia and the palace that had been bestowed on him by the King some years earlier. As the Queen's favourite he felt that he bore a charmed life and he was afraid of no one. Charlotte, indignant, appealed to her half-brother James for justice and revenge. James already detested this upstart Greek because of his political power and influence and agreed enthusiastically. He was then only about eighteen, but as George Hill writes, he 'showed the mettle of which he was made.' Taking with him two Sicilian *bravi*, he presented himself under cover of night at the Chamberlain's palace and demanded to talk to Thomas in private. He had certain important business to discuss with the Chamberlain, he said, and asked him to clear the room. Thomas complied, but wanted the two Sicilians to leave, too. James reassured him, saying that they could stay, as they did not understand Greek. It is said that then James himself viciously attacked Thomas, stabbing him full in the face while the Chamberlain was still off his guard. Then he signalled to the two Sicilians to finish off the wounded man. The deed accomplished, James and his henchmen made their escape, although James narrowly escaped death himself when a stone was thrown at him by one of the Chamberlain's servants. James then made his way to the house of the Constable, Carceran Suares, but he was not admitted, so he



retired to his archiepiscopal palace. Queen Helena, who, by the death of Thomas, had lost her most valuable ally, could not persuade the King to punish his son for the murder. The High Court, however, deprived James of his See and his revenues.

The news of the ferocious murder of the Chamberlain horrified the citizens. James applied to the Viscount of Nicosia, James Gurri, in an attempt to recover the confiscated revenues, but to no avail. Gurri suggested that James should appeal to the Queen's confessor, but the priest refused to mediate. Now isolated and fearing the worst from his enemies, James one night climbed over the walls of the city near the Armenian quarter. On the other side a horse was waiting and James rode through the night the thirty miles to Salines (modern Larnaca), accompanied by his squire, Martinengo de Lion, and a priest of St. Sophia.

At Salines James embarked on a Catalan caravel belonging to John Tafur, one of his strongest partisans, but in the open sea they met a Florentine galley and James transferred to it for greater safety. The two ships sailed round Cape Greco to Famagusta, where the Admiral of Cyprus demanded that the Florentine Captain should hand James over. The demand was refused and the ships set sail for Rhodes.

The Grand Master of the Knights of St. John was very pleased to welcome James and paid all his expenses. The Hospitallers saw in James an opponent of the Greek faction of which Queen Helena was the leader. James stayed at Rhodes for five or six months, waiting for a summons from his father to return to Cyprus and his See. At Rhodes he met a number of Cypriot malcontents, including two Augustinian monks, Friar Sulpitius (or Salpous) and Friar William Goneme. According to George Bustron, Father Goneme said to James: 'Take heart, I will do whatever is necessary for your honour and pleasure.' True to his word, Goneme proved to be an invaluable assistant, often saving a dangerous situation with the sharpness of either his wits or his sword. Later on, James made him Archbishop of Nicosia.

When, after a long wait, no message from Cyprus had arrived, James and his followers sailed back to Cyprus on the Catalan vessel of his friend Tafur. On 1 May 1457, they landed secretly by night at Kyrenia. The same night he marched with his party

the fifteen miles over the mountain range to Nicosia. There he scaled the walls of the city again in the vicinity of the Armenian quarter where he had friends, and went directly to the residence of James Gurri. James's men entered the house from the back and forced their way through a narrow corridor into the living quarters. Gurri was asleep in bed. When he heard the commotion, he thought that a certain Don Pedro had come to take his revenge because Gurri's valet had killed Don Pedro's valet. But worse was to come. Tafur and Kamus, his servant, dragged the unfortunate Viscount into the corridor where James was waiting. Gurri fell on his knees and begged for mercy, but James turned a deaf ear and ordered his men to stab him to death. The raiding gang sacked and looted the house. In the meantime, Father Sulpitius, aided by Martinengo de Lion, led a mob in an attack on the house of the Viscount's brother, Thomas Gurri. Thomas escaped through a trap door on the roof, with the secret assistance of Martinengo, but his house was plundered. The loot from the houses of the two brothers was carried to the Archbishopric, which James now occupied.

At daybreak John II heard the news that his prodigal son was back. Immediately the alarm bell pealed forth and the royal troops were hastily mustered to defend the palace. The King formally arraigned James before the High Court, demanding judgment according to the law laid down in the Assizes. A warrant was issued and three knights were dispatched to arrest him. James, however, refused to go with them and remained inaccessible behind the walls of the Archbishop's palace; but he sent a message protesting that he was and always had been completely loyal to the King, for whom he was ready to die at any moment. He had, he declared, attacked only his own personal enemies; all he wanted was the restoration of his See and its revenues and tithes, which the King had willingly bestowed upon him. The majority of the High Court were only too well aware of John's affection for his natural son. Accordingly, they reinstated James as Archbishop, restored his revenues and offered a safe conduct for his men on condition that they embarked and left the island at once. When James received the good news of his reinstatement and the return of his revenues, he at once went to visit the King. It is recorded that

*Opposite*  
 Kiti Tower was built in  
 the early sixteenth  
 century by the  
 Venetians. The fief had  
 belonged to Henry of  
 Lusignan in 1469







92

Philipp vō gots.  
genaden künig:  
von apem





the sight of his father's armed guards afforded him much amusement.

At the palace he was conducted to the chamber where Queen Helena lay sick. King John, in the presence of the ailing Queen, made a show of reprimanding him. The shrewd Helena could hardly have been deceived by this family charade, but she was somewhat mollified, perhaps because of the weakness engendered by her illness, perhaps also because she grudgingly acknowledged in the ruthless young man a kindred spirit. James duly ordered his men to depart for their ships and himself bade them farewell when they left Nicosia; these desperadoes were escorted on their way to the coast by the Bailie and carried their loot unmolested to Kyrenia and their waiting ships.

The defeat of her allies and the triumph of James adversely affected the already frail health of the Queen. She was too feeble now to fight back against the Bastard. There was only one thing she could still do to avert the complete collapse of her Greek and Orthodox policies. Since the death of the Portugese Prince John of Coimbra the Catholic party had been negotiating the marriage of Charlotte to Prince Louis of Savoy. He was Charlotte's cousin, the son of the Duke Louis of Savoy and her Aunt Anna, her mother's sister. Such a union was anathema to Helena, not only because Prince Louis was, like Charlotte's first husband, a westerner and a Catholic, but also because, as a first cousin, it was strictly forbidden under Orthodox Canon Law for him to marry Charlotte. On her deathbed Helena implored her daughter not to commit the mortal sin of marrying her first cousin. If she did, prophesied the dying Queen, misfortune and disaster would befall her and her reign would come to an ignominious end. Helena pressed John to take an oath that he would not allow such a union.

James was, by all accounts, much affected by Helena's death, putting his household into deep mourning and sending his formal condolences to the King his father. But James's enemies persuaded John II to forbid his son to attend the Queen's funeral. James was so disturbed by this that he shut himself up

*Opposite*  
John II, King of Cyprus  
(wrongly named Philip);  
from the *Diary of Georg*  
*von Ehingen*  
(Württembergische  
Landsbibliothek,  
Stuttgart)

in his palace for two days and refused to come out. The relationship between Helena and James, those two strong personalities, is worth commenting upon. However strained their relations were at times, Helena admired James's strength of will; she also realised the King's partiality towards the Bastard. Instead of attempting to remove James, she used him as a means of furthering her own objects. For his part James approved of the Queen's Greek nationalist policy. He himself, the son of a Greek Orthodox mother and a French Catholic father, was a cosmopolitan prince and more Cypriot than anything else. Helena's domestic policy well suited his own desire to keep western Catholic influences on the island at bay.

Once Queen Helena was safely buried the King dispatched ambassadors to offer to Prince Louis, the son of the Duke of Savoy, the hand of the Princess Charlotte. Then King John, suddenly overcome with affection for his son, summoned James to the castle at that time the royal residence. The knights, realising that with Helena now out of the way the star of James was in the ascendant, went in a body to escort the Bastard into the King's presence; but, mindful of recent events, they prudently would not allow James to be accompanied by his attendants. James's mother, Marietta, hearing that her son's men had not been allowed in and fearing the worst for her son, rushed to the castle where, wailing loudly, she sat at the top of the stairs at the main entrance and refused to move until she saw James leaving unharmed. James himself declared later that if he had known beforehand of this insulting treatment he would not have come to the castle. But he was in high spirits as he left, for the King had showered him with affection. Next morning the knights went to the archiepiscopal palace to pay their respects and he received them all politely, friends and former foes alike. Again he visited the King and father and son breakfasted together. As it was a hot day, the Bastard took off his tunic and remained in his undershirt. His doting father, seeing his handsome figure, was full of paternal pride and 'loaded him with caresses and favours and refused to let him out of his sight.' John embraced and kissed James and entrusted all the affairs of the Kingdom into his hands. At midday, James returned to the archiepiscopal palace and, attended by his retainers, climbed the



tower and looked down on Nicosia; he seemed at that moment to have reached the height of his ambition.

But fate decreed otherwise and James's glittering expectations were soon dispelled. John II died suddenly in July 1458, only three months after the death of Queen Helena. According to Loredano, popular opinion attributed his death to debauchery, while his doctors attributed it to poison. A motive for his murder was not far to seek if it was assumed that the King had intended to bestow the succession upon James, a development which would have wrecked the designs of the Catholic party. Thus, many people wanted him out of the way, not least among them the Pope. The Catholic party had endured enough under the rule of a weak, sybaritic king and his shrewish Byzantine consort; the prospect of Charlotte safely enthroned and married to a sound western Catholic prince gave them hopes of better days, for their personal fortunes and for the security of the island kingdom of Cyprus. The papacy was constantly concerned about the exposed position of Cyprus and often rallied support for the island among the Catholic princes of Europe. It must have been very irksome for Rome to see the affairs of Cyprus administered by the incompetent hands of John II or, worse still, by the hostile hands of Queen Helena, an avowed enemy of Catholicism.

In 1441, the year before Helena's arrival in Cyprus, John II had taken part in a Catalan naval attack on Famagusta, which had been in the hands of the Genoese since 1373. The Genoese denounced John to the Sultan of Egypt for harbouring and encouraging pirates, Catalans and others, who infested the eastern Mediterranean and ravaged the coasts of Syria and Egypt. This was unjust, although it was true that John II could not prevent the pirates from using Cyprus as a base for their operations. The King was anxious to placate the Sultan, sending him precious gifts together with the tribute that his father Janus had undertaken to pay.

In 1443 Pope Eugenius IV issued an Encyclical pointing out the exposed position of Cyprus and Rhodes, the two eastern outposts of Christendom, and urged the western nations to come to their assistance. In 1448 Ibrahim Beg, the Grand Karaman, took the city of Gorchigos, which was lost to Cyprus forever. Gorchigos, the Calais of Cyprus, had first been acquired by the

Lusignans in 1360. The loss of this city on the Cilician coast encouraged various Turkish rulers who, two years later in 1450, planned a concerted attack on Cyprus under Loughatou Beg, Emir of Scandalore. The attack was averted after a show of naval force by the Grand Master of Rhodes and other western Christian nations who responded to the Pope's exhortations. John II and the Emir of Scandalore concluded a peace treaty in September 1448 — written in Cypriot Greek.

The threat to Cyprus from the Turks to the north and from the Arabs to the south moved Pope Nicholas V in 1451 to urge all Christian Powers to send money and troops to Cyprus. Indulgences were granted for contributions to the fortification of Nicosia; documents issued to attest to the granting of these indulgences are the first specimens in European history of the process of printing with moveable type. The earliest dated example is of 22 October 1454; it bears the arms of Cyprus and was printed at Mainz. King John empowered his envoy, Paul Chappe, to receive contributions and his representatives travelled all over Europe.

No sooner had John II breathed his last than the Constable, Carceran Suares, drew the royal ring from the dead man's finger and dispatched it by the knight Balian Bustron to Charlotte, whereupon the other knights proceeded to her palace, hailed her as the rightful Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Armenia, and swore to live and die in her service.

The first to swear allegiance was James. After the King's funeral the knights escorted him on his way back to the Archbishop's palace. As they were passing the castle, Carceran Suares invited him to dinner and also pressed James's followers to accompany him. But after Markios, James's maternal uncle, had warned him to be on his guard he declined, saying that he was too distressed at the death of his royal father to be able to accept the invitation.

The next day Suares again invited James to dine with him, but Marietta, who had also been warned that the Constable might attempt to poison her son, had special dishes prepared and sent to the castle. Suares, noticing that James only ate the food sent



him by his mother, was offended and spoke harshly to him; after which James and his entourage left the castle and returned to his palace.

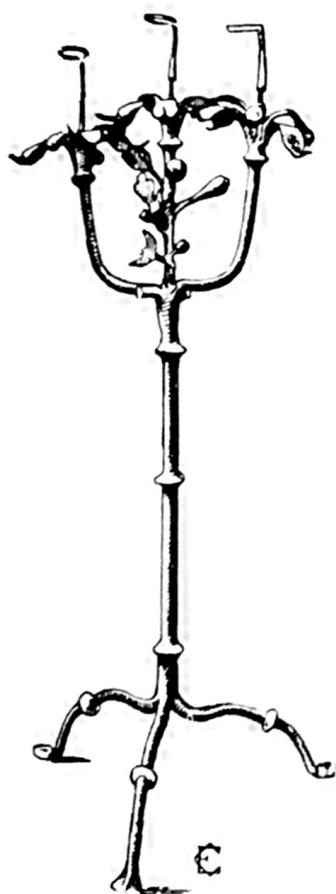
Every morning, after attending Mass at St. Sophia, James would present himself before Charlotte. In the beginning the new Queen showed many signs of favour to the Bastard, but soon his enemies prevailed upon her and she began to distrust him and to acquiesce in the councils of her knights. She herself asked James to prepare a galley to be dispatched to Venice to announce the death of John II and the accession of his daughter. James placed a poster on the door of his palace advertising for a crew to man this ship, but his enemies tore it down and further ill-feeling ensued. At a meeting of the Queen's advisers it was decided that James should not be allowed to visit her if he were accompanied by any of his men. Before he had heard of this decision James rode to the palace with his usual escort, but was told he could only enter if he were alone. When he sent his priest to find out from the Queen herself if this was true, Charlotte sent a curt reply: 'Send him my greetings and tell him that whatever my Council thinks good I consider good also.'

When the forty days of mourning for the dead King were over, preparations began for the coronation of Charlotte, and James, as Archbishop-Designate, naturally wished to take part in the ceremony. Instead the High Court, with the Queen's approval, ordered James to stay at home with his men on the day of the coronation. This took place on 15 October 1458 and Charlotte was crowned by the Bishop of Limassol, the Bishop of Hebron and the Abbot of Bellapais. As she was leaving the precincts of St. Sophia after the ceremony, Charlotte's horse shied and the crown fell from her head to the ground. It was a bad omen.

The latest insult over the coronation ceremonies was too much for James's proud spirit to stomach. On 15 December 1458, he and eighty-five of his men planned to attack the palace, where at that time all the Queen's men were gathered. The plot was betrayed and, two days later, Charlotte sent three knights to arrest the Bastard. James refused to go with them. As a guarantee for his personal safety, he assembled in his palace three hundred of his most resolute followers, all well armed. To give added weight he also persuaded the Orthodox Archbishop



Silver gros of Queen Charlotte



One of a pair of  
wrought iron candelabra  
dating from the  
fourteenth century  
(St. Nicholas Cathedral,  
Famagusta)

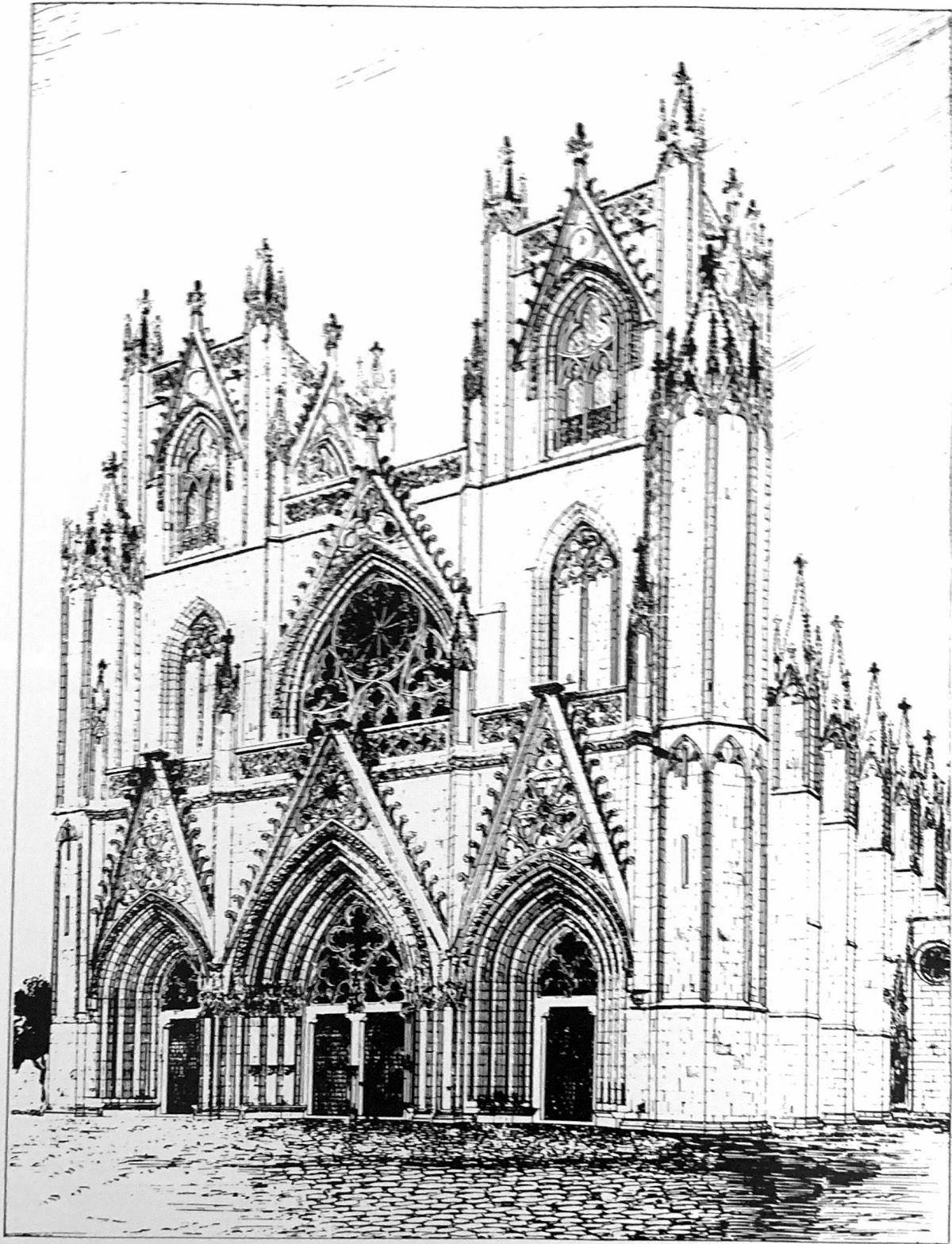
*Opposite*  
St. Nicholas Cathedral  
Famagusta

and some of his senior clergy to join him there. He declared that he was ready to die rather than allow himself to be brought before the High Court like a common criminal; but, if the Queen ordered him to present himself before her, he would gladly obey. Thereupon Charlotte ordered all her men to disarm and offered him safe conduct to the royal palace. Then 'it pleased the Queen and the Council,' as George Bustron puts it, to request the Venetian Bailie, accompanied by two knights, to escort James into her presence. At the same time, the High Court tried to negotiate with James and finally decided to put him under house arrest while they were deliberating on his case; but when James returned to his palace, he found it had been ransacked by his enemies. Not long afterwards he was warned that his enemies intended to seize him in the night and imprison him for high treason.

James acted at once on the warning. At two o'clock in the morning he slipped out of the Archbishop's palace, made his way to the Armenian quarter and climbed over the walls into the open fields beyond the city. With him were his uncle Markios, Father Goneme, George Bustron, the Cypriot chronicler, John de Verni, a Mameluke whose name is recorded as Nasser Chus, and also the two Sicilian desperadoes, Rizzo di Marino and Nicholas Morabito. They rode to Salines and boarded a caravel belonging to Nicholas Galimberto. At two-thirty, half an hour after James's escape, Carceran Suares arrived at the Archbishop's palace with the order for his arrest. His men burst into James's bedroom and even peered down the well but failing to find him set fire to the palace. Next day the gates of the city remained shut, but some fishermen who arrived from Salines said that they had seen James setting sail from there the previous night. A few days later a merchant ship brought the news that James was at the court of the Mameluke Sultan.

Before sailing from Salines to Egypt James wrote to Charlotte a letter preserved by the chronicler Florio Bustron, assuring her that he had never wished to do her any harm, but only to serve her, not as a vassal or a knight, but as a loving brother. He was content with his office as Archbishop but his enemies wanted to drive him out of his home. He was born to be free and he refused to live as a slave. The Queen and her Councillors were very





*Opposite*  
Bellapais Abbey. This magnificent Premonstratensian abbey enjoyed royal patronage and was extended and enriched at various times. The church is of the thirteenth century, the conventual buildings mainly from the fourteenth

Bellapais Abbey; the cloisters

*Overleaf*  
St. Nicholas Cathedral (now the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque), Famagusta, was built in the early fourteenth century. The architecture is inspired by models from the Rhineland. On the left stands the Greek Orthodox Cathedral, St. George of the Greeks whose architecture shows a strong western influence. It was rebuilt in the fourteenth century

perturbed at the new turn of events; but this did not prevent them from receiving Prince Louis of Savoy and his entourage with great honour in Nicosia. Charlotte may even have thought that the arrival of the Savoyards would strengthen her position on the island in the forthcoming struggle between her half-brother and herself. Her wedding to her cousin Louis took place in Nicosia a few days later. At the same time, castles and fortifications throughout the island were repaired and reinforced with men and supplies. Savoyards were sent to garrison the castle of Sigouri, which commanded the road between the capital and Genoese Famagusta. Special care was taken to repair, supply and fortify Kyrenia Castle, the most formidable fortress on the island, with a well-protected harbour which could ensure supply by sea, free communication with the West, and, if need be, an escape route.

The Queen and Council then sent an embassy to the Sultan of Egypt without further delay; several of the prominent Savoyards who had come with Prince Louis joined this delegation. They were received favourably by the Sultan, not surprisingly as they had brought with them the arrears of the yearly tribute. However, their mission came to nothing because the members of the embassy died, one after another, from the plague that was then ravaging Cairo. (The pestilence did not spare James's followers either; John de Verni, among others, succumbed.) In Cyprus there was official mourning for the victims, but the Council soon met and appointed a new embassy under Peter Podocataro, a nobleman of Greek-Cypriot origin.

It was in Egypt that James first displayed his exceptional talents for diplomacy. Appearing before Sultan Inal James complained that he had been deprived of the crown of Cyprus, which was rightfully his, as the next male heir. His Arab hosts sympathised with his contention that his claim should have preference over that of Charlotte. It was natural for a man to govern. In the eyes of the Moslem Mamelukes, whose religion authorised a man to have numerous wives and concubines, James was not considered illegitimate because of the fact that his mother, Marietta, had been the mistress and not the wife of King John. Furthermore





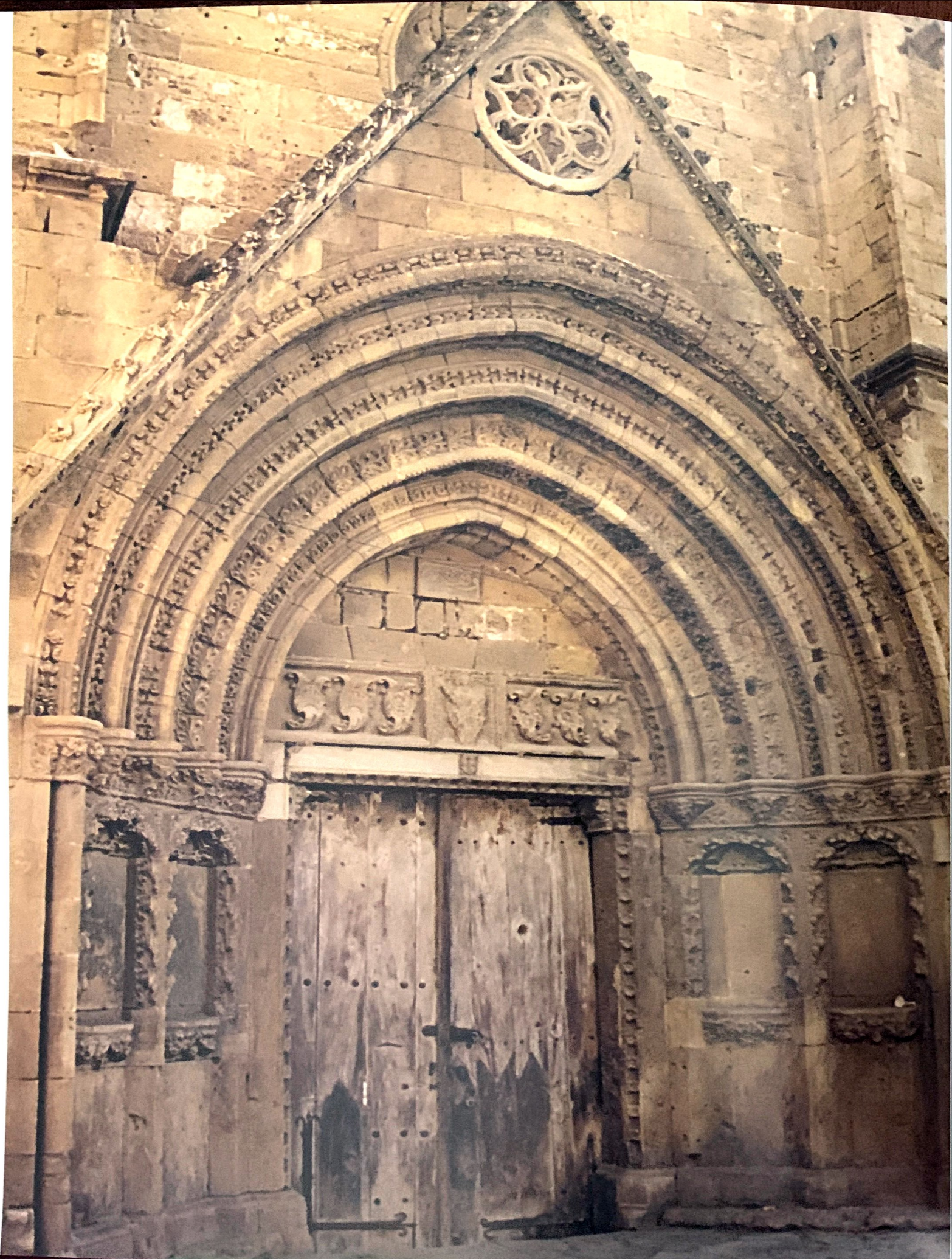














James's handsome appearance, noble bearing and accomplishments as a horseman endeared him to Inal and won over the Sultan's eldest son, who, at twenty-two, was the same age as James. James spoke as a Cypriot and reminded the Sultan of the damage done to Egypt by the Franks. Charlotte's husband, Prince Louis, was, unlike himself, 'a Gallicus homo'. (Even today, Arabs, as well as Greeks, refer with contempt to all people from western Europe as 'Franks'.) When Podocataro, the Queen's new envoy, offered to double the tribute, raising it from five thousand ducats to ten thousand, James, according to one source, outbid him by offering fifteen thousand. And, even more importantly, James offered larger bribes to the emirs. Pope Pius II accused James of renouncing Christianity during his stay at the Sultan's court in order to gain the support of the Mamelukes. The so-called 'foul oath' which Pius II accuses him of taking does not show that James became a Moslem but rather the contrary. In the oath, James swore by God that he would be a loyal vassal of the Sultan. If he failed to keep his word, he would, in that evil hour, become an apostate and abjure the Christian faith and it is clear from the lurid and blasphemous images he uses that James regarded such an apostacy as the worst fate that could befall him and invokes it solely to prove his sincerity. The Sultan would hardly be won over by James promising to commit various acts of sacrilege, while he would clearly be impressed by the enormity of the pledge. The historian Stephen of Lusignan accepts the account of Pope Pius II, while the chroniclers George Bustron and Loredano do not mention it at all. Florio Bustron recounts the story of the oath and rejects it. Mas Latrie regards the 'foul oath' as a malicious invention of James's enemies, he also apparently not understanding its true significance. The other story which scandalised the Christian faithful, that James attended a reception connected with the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed, is probably also true and shows James's diplomatic tact. If Paris was worth a Mass to Henry IV of France, Cyprus was worth an attendance at a Moslem festival to James.

Meanwhile the Sultan adroitly played one embassy off against the other. Since he had accepted her tribute he first acknowledged Charlotte as the lawful Queen of Cyprus. Her envoy, Peter



Bracket in the dorter,  
Bellapais Abbey

*Opposite*  
The main doorway of  
the church of St Nicholas  
(the Bedestan),  
Nicosia

Podocataro, also discreetly warned him that Prince Louis might receive help from the West and might punish Egypt if the Sultan rejected Charlotte's right to the throne. At the same time, the Sultan received a letter from Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople, threatening the Egyptian ruler if he failed to support James and also promising him the spoils from the future conquest of Rhodes if he co-operated. Obviously, the Turks did not relish the prospect of Franks with western connections as masters of Cyprus. A local potentate like James, who was thoroughly disliked by the Pope and the Franks in general, would be easier to deal with when the time came. This was a point of view that the Egyptian Sultan well understood, and Mehmet's letter probably tipped the balance in James's favour. Nevertheless, Inal made a show of agreeing to bestow the robe, the symbol of royal authority, on Podocataro, Charlotte's representative.

When James heard that the following day the Sultan was to acknowledge Charlotte he was in great despair. Again the resourceful Brother Goneme came to his rescue. According to George Bustron, Goneme exhorted the despondent James as follows: 'Place your hope in God and fear not. There shall be no king but you. Now go to bed, relax, and leave this business to me.' Taking with him only Nasser Chus, who spoke Arabic, the indefatigable Goneme spent the entire night in earnest negotiations with the emirs, offering bribes and giving promises. At daybreak he returned to James and briefed him: 'This is the present situation. The Queen's ambassador will now go to the Sultan to receive from him the robes of honour, one for himself and a second to take to Cyprus for the Queen. For this reason, you too should wait upon the Sultan and see what happens.'

Taking the hint, James rode immediately to the Sultan's palace, coming face to face there with Podocataro. As the two ceremonial robes were brought forward, the Mameluke attendants of the Sultan shouted in unison, 'Long live King James! Long live King James!' and, seizing the royal cloak, placed it upon James's shoulders. The Mamelukes next proceeded to tear to pieces the robe originally intended for Charlotte's ambassador. Podocataro and the Savoyards of his embassy were then handed over to James, to deal with as he thought fit. The Sultan



himself, who must have been aware of the plot, ordered his Grand Admiral to accompany James back to Cyprus at the head of the Egyptian fleet and to make certain that the crown of the island was secured for James. At the same time, the Sultan sent a letter to Louis, Charlotte's consort, ordering him to give up Cyprus, the Sultan's tributary island, to James; he also advised Louis to take Charlotte with him 'if he loved her.' The Mamelukes then escorted James, mounted on a camel and clad in the royal robe, through the streets of Cairo, amid the jubilant acclamations of the populace.

While still in Egypt, James rewarded his followers with lands and honours. Having cheerfully abandoned a career in the Church, as he was now recognised as King of Cyprus by his suzerain, the Sultan, the new James II appointed Brother Goneme as Archbishop of Nicosia. Nicholas Morabito he made Viscount of Nicosia; Rizzo di Marino he made Chamberlain of Cyprus. According to Cypriot custom, a man was dubbed knight by a baron in the presence of the monarch. James commanded Peter Podocataro to confer the order of knighthood on several of the King's entourage. Estates, money and titles were generously distributed to his faithful followers. When the ceremonies were concluded, and Podocataro's services were no longer required, he was put in chains, together with the Savoyards of Charlotte's embassy.

As the news reached Cyprus that James was on his way back from Egypt at the head of a force of Mamelukes, the royal court and the Latin clergy abandoned the capital, carrying with them all the treasures from the palace and the churches, and fled to Kyrenia where the impregnable castle, with easy access to the sea, provided a safer refuge. Nicosia was poorly defended; moreover, the court knew that the Greek Cypriots of the capital sided with James, whom they regarded as their defender and champion in their long struggle against the Latin ruling classes. Charlotte, although half Greek by birth, and Greek-speaking, had forfeited the people's sympathies by her marriages with two western Catholic princes, and Louis, her second husband, had turned out to be a dismal contrast to her dashing, unscrupulous



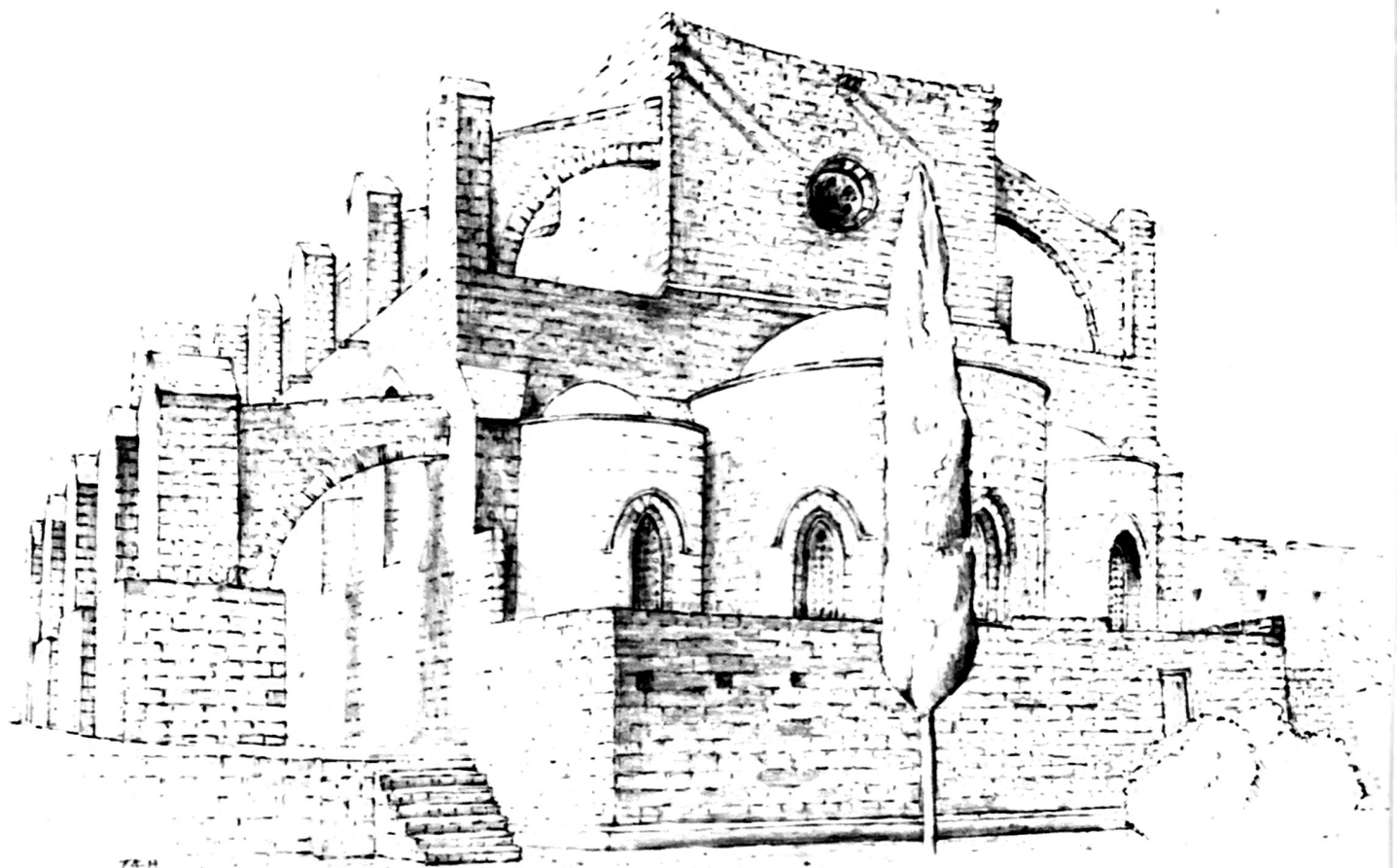
Silver gros of  
Louis of Savoy

and worldly-wise half-brother Apostoles, Big James, Yiakoumos. Those citizens who sympathised with Charlotte also left Nicosia and made for the mountain villages, while those who could took shelter with the Genoese in Famagusta.

On 8 September 1460, the Egyptian fleet appeared off Constantia, north of Famagusta, and then turned back and anchored at Ayia Napa. It was an armada of about eighty ships, large and small, under the command of the Grand Devitdar — the Grand Admiral. As soon as the troops landed many Cypriots came to offer their allegiance to James. The Bastard was affable to all, and he promised many bondsmen their liberty. He immediately sent Rizzo di Marino with fifty Mamelukes to the Mesaoria to foment rebellion, not a difficult task, as the serfs had already been won over by promises of freedom. Rizzo was also to procure oxen, wagons and pack animals and bring them to Salines for the transport of the heavy artillery to Nicosia. Salines, where the fleet would later unload its cannon and the main forces, was to be the base for the campaign. James next sent his uncle Markios with a strong force to capture the castle of Sigouri, which commanded the route to Famagusta, thus preventing any effective help reaching Nicosia from the Genoese of Famagusta. When the Egyptians surrounded the castle most of the garrison were not even at their posts, and the castellan, Thomas Machia, surrendered the keys, asking only that he and his wife and his property should be spared. In his place, James appointed a Venetian, Philip Pesaro, an old friend of his who had been imprisoned in Kyrenia by Charlotte but who had managed to escape and join James in Egypt. The Savoyards who were found in the castle were taken prisoner.

A vanguard of Mamelukes under the command of Goneme, the new Archbishop, took Nicosia and installed Nicholas Morabito as Viscount in place of Hector Chivides, who had fled to Kyrenia. Soon afterwards James himself entered the capital. There he recruited many new men, promising them a monthly salary. Troops were hastily dispatched to Limassol and Paphos, where the fortresses surrendered without a fight. Marching up from Salines the main force of Mamelukes reached Nicosia, camping outside the walls at Ayios Dhometios. Three days later, the Mamelukes set out for Kyrenia. Charlotte's men tried to





block the narrow passes over the Kyrenia mountains, but they were too late; the Mamelukes went through and camped on the narrow plain between the Kyrenia range and the sea at the village of Kazaphani, two miles east of Kyrenia. A short time later James arrived and took personal command of the siege of the fortress.

The church of SS. Peter and Paul, Famagusta

As soon as the besiegers had pitched their tents the defenders of Kyrenia sent a certain Brother Christopher, loaded with gifts (oxen, cows, hens, bread and sweetmeats) to the Grand Devitdar in order to plead their cause. He took the gifts and immediately distributed them among his soldiers, then handed Christopher over to James, who had him manacled and put with the other prisoners, of whom James now had quite a fair number. They included Peter Podocataro and the Savoyards from Sigouri Castle.

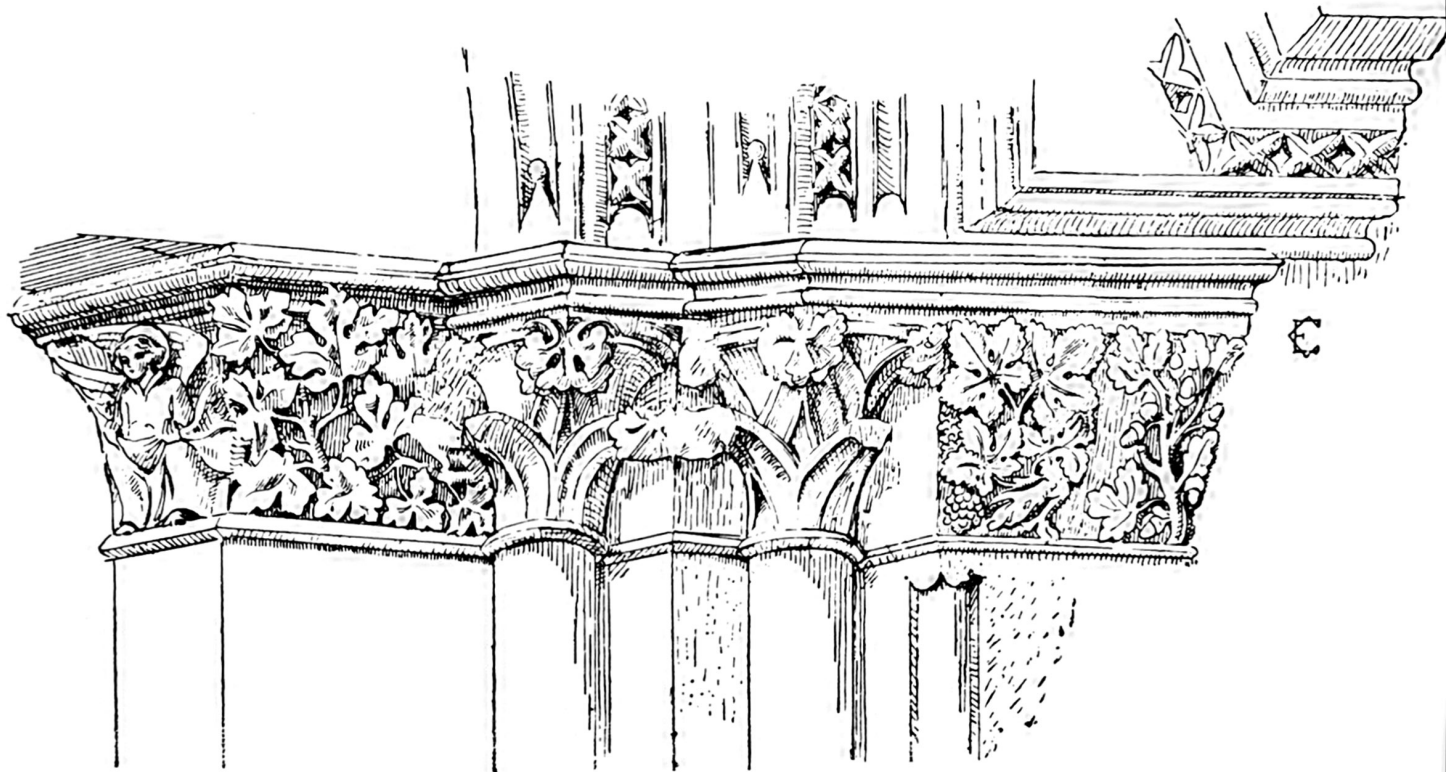
The Mamelukes set up their cannon at various points around

Kyrenia and bombarded the fortress by day and night. James also used his cannon against the castle. But the fortress was strong and well defended and could be supplied by sea. In the port beneath its walls there was a force of western ships large enough to prevent the Egyptian fleet from attempting a blockade. Thus communications and a safe route to and from the castle and the West were kept open throughout the four-year siege. Inside the spacious walls a large international concourse of knights from Savoy, Catalonia, Portugal, and many other parts of Europe manned the defences. Famous names among the defenders included Charlotte's uncle, Phoebus of Lusignan, Lord of Arsur; James de Flory, Count of Jaffa; Morprou de Grenier, Count of Rouchas; John de Montolif, Marshal of Cyprus; Tristan de Giblet; Peter Pelestri; Hector Chivides; Bernard Rieussec, Admiral of Cyprus; and Thomas de Verni, Marshal of Jerusalem. Sor de Naves was put in charge of the defence of the walls. Also present in Kyrenia Castle was the Venetian Andrew Cornaro who was later to play a significant role in furthering the interests of Venice in Cyprus.

For the second time the defenders of Kyrenia attempted to negotiate with the Mamelukes. Nicholas, the Dominican Bishop of Limassol, was sent as ambassador to the Grand Devitdar. The Bishop found the Admiral sitting on a carpet in his tent with King James sitting by his side. The Bishop fell on his knees before the Emir and handed over his gifts. He promised that the Sultan should be reimbursed for all the expenses he had incurred in coming to Cyprus. He also urged that it was unjust for the Sultan to displace Charlotte, the legitimate heir, who had recognised his suzerainty. To this the Admiral merely replied that he would consider the matter.

Eight days later the Admiral burned his war machines and tents, leaving behind a great quantity of provisions, and departed as if in defeat. Apparently he had heard that two of his galleys had been shipwrecked and, as winter was approaching, he wanted to return to his fleet. On his departure the Admiral offered a free passage to Egypt to anyone willing to follow him. In vain did James plead with the Mamelukes to stay on and, at his wit's end, he turned once again to his friend Goneme for advice. The clever cleric advised him to take to horse at once and

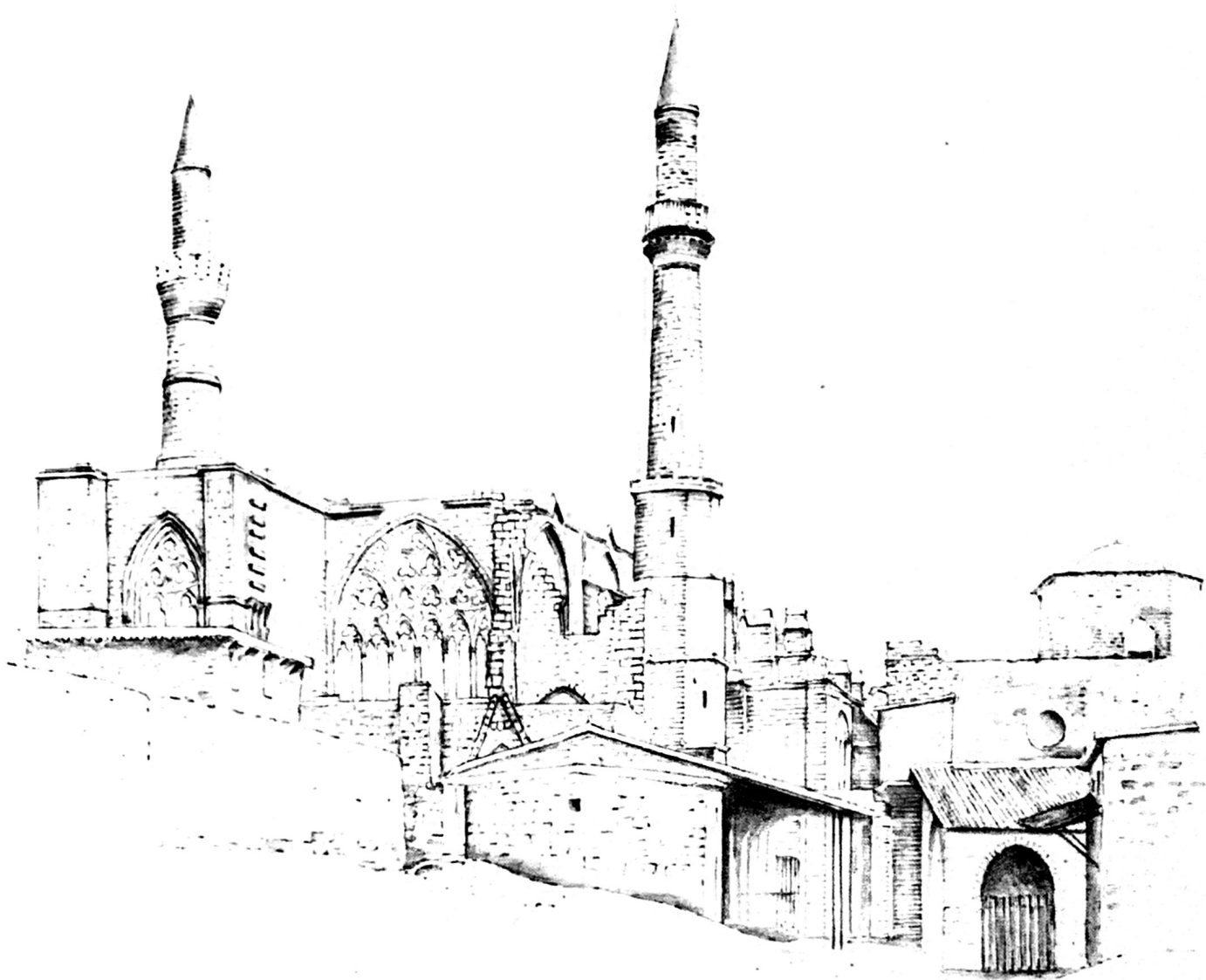




catch up with the Egyptians. 'Find out where the captains are, then fall at their feet and implore them unceasingly to take pity on you and to leave behind two hundred Mamelukes and two hundred foot soldiers under the command of a captain.' James followed his friend's council to the letter and caught up with the Admiral's men just as they were boarding their ships in Larnaca. In floods of tears, which had always come easily to him, James displayed his histrionic talents to the top of his bent. The Egyptians were moved at his performance and before leaving granted him the troops he had pleaded for so eloquently. Later James gave out that the Sultan of Egypt had died and that the Grand Devitdar, who aspired to be his successor, was anxious to be present in Cairo.

James returned post haste to Nicosia with his Mamelukes. George Bustron, the chronicler, brought the *paroikoi* and *francomati*, archers and crossbowmen, from Salines. In the capital James speedily mustered as many men as he could and then returned to Kyrenia to continue the siege. The defenders of the fortress thought the departure of the Grand Devitdar and his men was a trap and no one dared to come out of the castle.

The north doorway  
(detail), church of SS.  
Peter and Paul,  
Famagusta



St. Sophia Cathedral  
(now the Selimiye  
mosque), Nicosia, dates  
from the very end of the  
twelfth century. It is in  
the Gothic style of  
central France

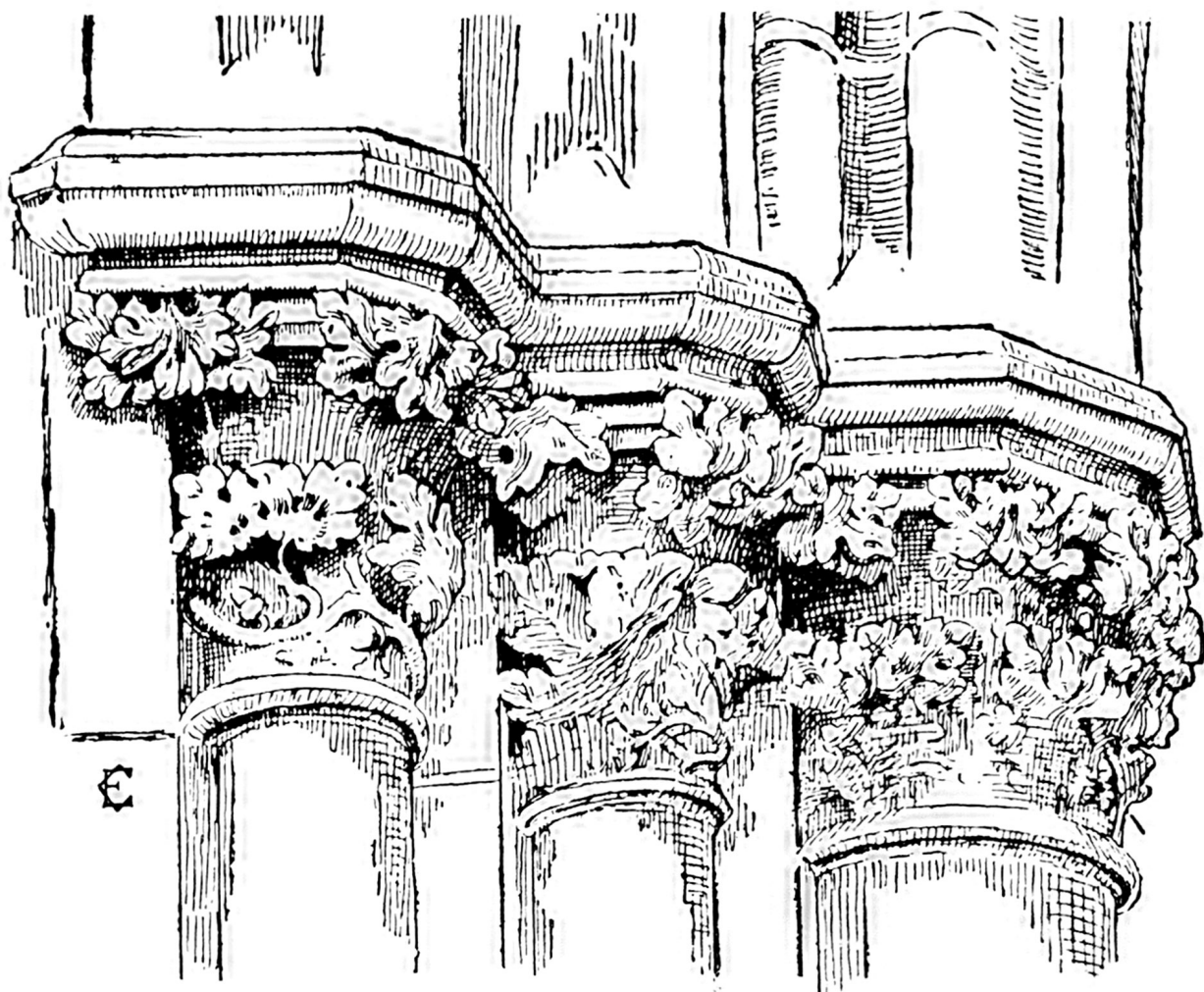
*Opposite*  
St. Sophia Cathedral;  
the nave

Meanwhile the Genoese from Famagusta, exploiting the situation, had been raiding the villages in the Karpas peninsula. James first sent Archbishop Goneme to deal with this and the muscular Christian ambushed the Famagustans, killing thirty-five of them. Then the Sicilian, Rizzo di Marino, was dispatched and he not only killed forty of the raiders, but also captured the captain of one of the Genoese ships and sent him to James in Nicosia, who promptly hanged him.

By the beginning of 1461 James controlled all of the island, apart from Genoese Famagusta and Kyrenia. In Kyrenia the long siege had become very bitter and there were several ugly







Porch capitals, St.  
Sophia Cathedral

episodes. When a peasant farmer was captured on his way to the watermill at Lapithos to grind his wheat, James ordered one of his Mamelukes to decapitate him on the spot, in spite of his pitiful entreaties. When Hector Chivides was ambushed and captured, James was again merciless and Chivides's head was displayed like a common criminal's on the public pillory. When the Mamelukes captured the wife and the two handsome sons of the priest of Lapithos, they sent the two young men on camels to Nicosia, circumcised them and forcibly converted them to Islam. The same day, they brought back in flour sacks the severed heads of twenty-seven men who had attempted to make a sortie from the castle. A galley, sent from Kyrenia to Rhodes to seek help and having on board Walter de Nores and his two sons, was shipwrecked at Pendayia in the bay of Morphou. The Mamelukes intended to execute all the crew and passengers, except for



Walter de Nores's sons, whom they planned to turn into Moslems; but Goneme and James himself intervened and prevented them. The prisoners were taken to Nicosia to see the head of Hector Chivides, still exposed on the pillory. This object lesson was sufficient to cause all the prisoners to pledge their allegiance to James, with the exception of de Nores, who resolutely declined. 'I have but one faith and I have given it,' he said. His loyalty, 'la fè de ser Galtier,' became proverbial on the island.

By the spring of 1461 still no help had arrived from the West for Kyrenia. Charlotte, impatient, left her husband behind and set out to seek assistance in her struggle against James. She went first to Rhodes, where the Knights of St. John received her well, although they took care not to put in jeopardy their substantial interests in Cyprus by actually helping her. From Rhodes the disappointed Charlotte sailed on to Italy to seek an audience with the Pope. At the end of October 1461 she arrived at Ostia. The curia tried to discourage her from seeing the Pope, but the determined daughter of the Lusignans could not be deterred. When she did meet Pius II, Charlotte's manner of speaking was 'torrential, after the Greek manner,' as he was later to report. 'Holy Father, who has not heard of the disasters that have befallen my house?' she began. In an eloquent speech, translated by interpreters, she described the sufferings caused by 'a brother born out of wedlock — if indeed he is my brother.' Charlotte asserted that her fight was not against men who were fellow Christians but against those who were 'the most bitter enemies of the Cross.' She claimed that James himself had denied the Christian faith and she pleaded with the 'Supreme Father of Christianity, Protector of the Faith' that 'the unhappy Kingdom of Cyprus might not be lost to the rightful religion.' She also warned the Pope that if Cyprus were captured by the Moslems Rhodes and Crete would follow and a Moslem fleet would appear on the coast of Italy. She intended, she said, to go to Savoy to raise an army, but she needed financial assistance for the beleaguered city of Kyrenia. As she concluded, the unfortunate Charlotte burst into tears.

'Dry your tears and trust in us,' was the Pope's response. 'Your

nobility and your misfortunes are well known to us.' He then delivered a short lecture to the distraught Queen. Her father-in-law, the Duke of Savoy, he told her, unlike the other Italian princes, had not made a contribution to the papal appeal for funds with which to raise an army against the infidel. Her husband, he reminded her, had not thought fit when on his way to Cyprus to marry her to break his journey at Mantua, where he, the Pope, was then presiding over a congress, to pay his respects. At that time, Pius primly continued, he had predicted that the House of Savoy would pay for their slight to the Church. 'Now divine retribution against the House of Savoy and against yours has begun, for how often did your mother (Queen Helena Paleologina) disregard the canons of the Apostolic Church? The children are now suffering for the sins of their parents.' Despite all this the Pope promised to help Charlotte and he received her several times during her stay in Rome.

Charlotte next travelled to Siena, to Florence, to Bologna (on 20 November), to Milan and to Savoy; but she found her father-in-law most reluctant to supply her with money and troops for her Cyprus enterprise. Crestfallen, Charlotte sailed back to Rhodes in 1462. Her husband, Louis, arrived there in February 1463 but left in October for Venice where he made an ineffective plea for aid.

There is a story which illustrates the desperate straits to which the defenders of Kyrenia had been reduced. Some time after Charlotte's visit to the Pope, James de Flory, Count of Jaffa, was sent to Constantinople to ask the Ottoman Sultan to come to the aid of Charlotte. According to this account de Flory was empowered to make an offer of tribute to the Sultan and even to offer Kyrenia to him on Charlotte's behalf. However, this diplomatic initiative came to nothing when a powerful pasha whom the Cypriot envoy had offended promptly took de Flory prisoner and had him sawn in half.

The Pope was not the leader of the Christian world, but he was certainly the leader of Christendom in its confrontation with Islam and as such he could hardly be ignored by any Christian ruler. So James, too, sent envoys to Rome in a bid to secure his



sympathy. In July 1461 the Bishop of Limassol and Philip Podocataro, a learned lawyer and brother of Peter, who had by now been forgiven and received into James's camp, reached Venice and applied to the Senate for passports on which to travel to Rome. The Venetians, who were officially neutral in the Cyprus civil war, complied, describing the bearers as well-wishers of the Venetian Republic. The Cypriot envoys then went to Florence, but decided to postpone a meeting with Cosimo de' Medici until after they had had an audience with the Pope. In the event Pius II refused to listen to them because he strongly supported Charlotte as the legitimate heir to the throne.

While besieging Kyrenia James maintained a loose blockade on the city of Famagusta. At the beginning of January 1464, the siege tightened and by the summer the position of the defenders was desperate. When no provisions or reinforcements arrived the city surrendered, in January 1464. James, true to his word, faithfully observed the terms of the surrender. Thus, after ninety years, Genoese rule over Famagusta came to an end. The thorn in the side of every Cypriot ruler for almost a century had been removed. James appointed Nicholas Morabito as Captain of the city and gave him strict orders not to open the city gates to any one during the hours of night, not even to himself. The Bastard had heard that the Mamelukes, who were by now completely out of hand, murdering and looting, had planned his own assassination and the capture of Famagusta as a first step towards taking control of the whole island. So, when one night Janibeg, the Commander of the Mamelukes, demanded admission to the city Morabito refused. Next day, James responded to the Mamelukes' complaints with fair and reassuring words. At the same time, he sent a message to his men in Nicosia, both Franks and Greeks, to gather in Famagusta. He then arranged for the Mamelukes to set up camp in a plain near Famagusta where they were lavishly praised and feasted. Then, in the small hours, at a given signal, the King's men attacked the camp, surprised the Mamelukes as they were sleeping and slaughtered them to the last man. Only two or three of the force, trusted friends of James, had been invited to the palace that fatal night and thus escaped. The massacre was executed with such ruthless efficiency that many observers fancied they detected the hand of the redoubtable



Silver gros of  
King James II

Sicilian, Rizzo di Marino. James promptly dispatched his trusted Mameluke friends to Egypt, loaded with gifts, to explain ruefully to the Sultan that the Egyptian army had, by the many misdeeds they had perpetrated, brought upon themselves the spontaneous wrath of the people. When the sister of Janibeg complained to the Sultan that James had killed her brother, and demanded that he should be punished, the Sultan ignored her suit. Outraged, she sent to Cyprus a hired desperado in the guise of a merchant to exact vengeance on James. The assassin found James strolling alone on the mole at Famagusta and immediately whipped out his dagger and attacked, stabbing him in the neck. But James was a tall, powerful, athletic man and managed to throw off his assailant. Outmatched, the Egyptian plunged into the sea, hoping to swim away to freedom, but James's men caught up with him in the water and finished him off.



Silver demi-gros of  
King James II

Soon after the fall of Famagusta, the fortress of Kyrenia also surrendered, probably in the autumn of 1464. The garrison had been sorely reduced by famine, but it was the Commandant of the castle, Sor de Naves, who was responsible for the surrender. This Sicilian adventurer had his own galleys and his name was dreaded throughout the Levant. James had been cultivating de Naves and finally promised him the hand of his illegitimate daughter Charla. (Another version makes her his cousin, being the illegitimate daughter of his maternal uncle Markios; in any case she is not the same as the better-attested daughter of James who had the same name and was removed from the island after his death by the Venetians.) This alliance made the Sicilian a very rich man, although the pathetic young Charla died soon afterwards, of grief, as it was said, at having been married off to such a coarse ruffian as de Naves.

The surrender of Famagusta by the Genoese and of Kyrenia Castle by Charlotte's men left James in 1464 sole ruler of Cyprus. He toured the whole island and made certain that all the garrisons were loyal and that all the local landowners had sworn fealty. James was a born politician and freely forgave all those who had formerly supported Charlotte; and many noblemen who had fled during the civil war now returned and pledged their





loyalty to the new sovereign. On his return to Nicosia James summoned the High Court, which promptly recognised him as King. The knights took the oath of allegiance and placed themselves and their possessions at his disposal. James distributed offices, estates, houses, revenues, pensions, corn and wine with a generous hand. Both natives and foreigners who had stood by him were royally rewarded. A list has survived of nearly two hundred names of people of all kinds who were recipients of the King's largesse. Prominent on the list was the name of his mother, Dame Marietta of Patras; other names included the Catalan John Perez Fabregues, the Sicilian Rizzo di Marino and

Pope Sixtus IV receiving Queen Charlotte; fresco school of Melozzo da Forele. Among the Queen's attendants are Hugo de Langlois and Louis Podocataro (Church of S. Spirito, Rome)

the Arab, Curcuma. Among the distinguished Cypriots who were rewarded were Archbishop William Goneme, Peter Podocataro and James de Nores.

*Opposite*

The thirty-one line indulgence printed by Gutenberg in 1455 in aid of the Kingdom of Cyprus and bearing the seal of the island's King, John II. It is one of the earliest documents to be printed with moveable type

(John Rylands Library, Manchester)

Charlotte, Queen of Cyprus, entering her name in the registry of members of the confraternity of S. Spirito; fresco by Guidobaldo Abbatini (Sacristy of S. Spirito, Rome)

*Overleaf*

The arms of Queen Charlotte with inescutcheon of the arms of Savoy. The swords and scrolls are the insignia of the Order of the Sword  
(Manuscript in the Biblioteca Vaticana)

Bowl of sgraffiato ware from Cyprus; fourteenth or fifteenth century  
(British Museum)

According to later and possibly unreliable sources James carried out a thorough reform of the judicial system by which the customary delays were cut down and the whole legal process made more efficient. In his travels around the island James patiently listened to grievances and personally resolved disputes, often paying for settlements out of his own pocket. There were already long-established schools of foreign languages in Cyprus and many educated Cypriots spoke Greek, French, Italian, Latin and Arabic. He invited artists and poets to his court in emulation of other Renaissance princes.

Cyprus was no longer a Frankish crusader kingdom. James was the son of a Frankish king and his Greek mistress and his court reflected the cosmopolitan Mediterranean society of the age. The native Greek population sank further into abject poverty, a poverty aggravated by a series of natural disasters which affected the island. Drought prevented the crops from growing and those shoots of green that did appear were devoured by swarms of locusts. In 1469, the wheat harvest was destroyed by insects and there was great famine in the land. James made arrangements for wheat to be brought in from abroad. The next year Cyprus was stricken by the plague, which lasted for two and a half years and carried off three quarters of the population. The court moved to the village of Akaki. When Caterina Cornaro arrived in 1472 the epidemic had only just ended.

At the same time, the Sultan of Egypt demanded that the tribute (which James himself is supposed to have promised to increase in his bid for recognition) should no longer be paid in camlets and brocades, which were produced on the island, but in gold coins. James never forgot that he owed his position to the Egyptian Sultan and he was careful to pay the tribute regularly. The Sultan, who had given him the crown, could also take it away. Charlotte's party continued to intrigue and were always ready to step in and pay tribute if James were to default and thus bring down upon himself the displeasure of his suzerain. Being a



















tributary of the Sultan of Egypt did not provide protection for Cyprus against the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople. The Turkish threat became more real every day and James was obliged to build and man galleys to protect his island kingdom from marauding infidels. Lack of funds was a perennial problem. At the King's suggestion, the High Court approved the imposition of heavy taxes to pay for the ravages wrought by civil war, famine and pestilence, to pay the tribute to Egypt and to pay for armaments for defence against the Ottomans. Many wealthy nobles handed over their revenues and portions of their estates in order to ensure the survival and prosperity of the Kingdom.

James's generosity to his nobles and other followers at the conclusion of the civil war did not extend to the poor, the weak and the underprivileged. He was hard and unfeeling in his attitude towards the peasantry, many of whom had joined his campaign against Charlotte in hopes of a better life. James's victory did not, after all, save the peasants from ill-treatment by their Frankish overlords. Even in those cases where the old masters were replaced by new ones the peasants' lot did not improve. Often bare-footed and in rags, stooped and emaciated from famine, hardships and unremitting toil, living in wretched hovels, they presented a pitiful picture throughout the countryside. A peasant revolt which broke out in 1472 — shortly before Caterina left Venice for Cyprus — was brutally put down by Peter Davila, one of James's most trusted henchmen.

The numerous misfortunes that darkened the reign of James II gave rise to a feeling of discontent and the highly superstitious nature of the people attributed them to the irregular manner in which James had gained the crown. In the Middle Ages a kind of mystical aura surrounded the person of an appointed monarch, who was at the apex of an elaborate hierarchical system; by Renaissance writers this was elaborated into the Divine Right of Princes, made familiar in Britain by the earlier Stuarts. To disturb this system, it was believed, was to promote chaos and disaster. The question of kingship in relation to the medieval kings of Cyprus had attracted the attention of the scholars of the

*Opposite*  
Goblet of sgraffiato ware  
from Cyprus; fourteenth  
or fifteenth century

day. The great Dominican theologian, Thomas Aquinas, addressed his treatise *De regimine principum* (On the Rule of Princes) to Hugh II of Cyprus, who reigned from 1253 to 1267. In this work the Angelic Doctor expounded the traditional notion of a divinely regulated monarchy, a theory which coincided with the ideas of the famous Cypriot jurist, John of Ibelin. The methods employed by James II to secure the title of king made a mockery of the traditional medieval beliefs, and many Cypriots may have felt uneasy at the thought that they themselves, even if they had not been involved in any specific sinful acts, had at least been guilty of complicity in the expulsion of Charlotte, the lawful heir. The famine, the pestilence, the drought, the infestations of locusts, the Turkish threat, the humiliation at the hands of the Sultan of Egypt, the peasant revolt — all these disasters could be interpreted as signs of divine displeasure. Order and Degree, the basis of the medieval political framework, had been disturbed and all kinds of evils befell the hapless kingdom. Shakespeare expressed the same philosophy in *Troilus and Cressida*: 'Take but degree away, untune that string,/and, hark! what discord follows.' James, although generally tolerant, forgiving and magnanimous towards former opponents, was extremely conscious of this critical spirit towards his person and his rule, and often flared up in violent outbursts when provoked. The mere fact that Charlotte was still alive and was still making the rounds of the courts of Europe, calling him, among other things, a 'bloodthirsty apostate and usurper of the throne', was a perpetual irritant that made him extremely sensitive to any kind of challenge or defiance, real or imagined. To him the facts of the matter were clear. He was the sole male offspring of the late King, and men were more suited to govern than women. Cyprus was a tributary of the Sultan of Egypt and the Sultan himself had invested him with the robe of kingship; moreover, the crown was his by right of conquest, a final and clinching argument in the view of a man of his straightforward and vigorous temperament.

True to the family tradition of the Lusignans, James had, from early youth, been passionately fond of hunting. The Lusignan kings used packs of tame leopards for the chase; James, who liked exotic animals, kept a tame lioness, for whose upkeep



one besant a day was allotted on the official pay list. More usually, dogs and falcons were taken to the field on the frequent hunting trips of the King and his courtiers. On one occasion, James invited his cousin, Clarion of Lusignan, who had never entirely abandoned his support for Charlotte, despite James's many efforts to win him over. They were on a hawking expedition and the King gave instructions that no falcons were to be released until he gave the signal. This was just the kind of petty domineering that to Clarion, a member, though illegitimate, of the royal family, symbolised the capricious and tyrannical nature of the young King. When a particularly fine pheasant flew overhead he could not resist flying his falcon. James was immediately informed and, riding at full speed, soon confronted Clarion, grabbed him by the beard and, unseating him, threw him to the ground. Then he viciously trampled on the prostrate man's face with spurred boots, scoring deep furrows in the flesh; his anger spent, he turned away, leaving the unfortunate victim of his rage to be carried away, half-dead, by his attendants. Those who witnessed this ugly scene were left in no doubt who was the master in Cyprus.

Some time afterwards, James asked if Clarion was still alive, and, on being told that he was, commanded him to come to court. Clarion ignored the summons. It was not only the inexcusable savagery of the King — Clarion also suspected James of having an affair with his mother, Eschive de Nores, who must have been more than double the King's age — a mere detail to such a notorious philanderer. James, furious at Clarion's failure to appear at court, deprived him of his twenty-four fiefs, including the rich village of Lapithos, leaving him only one small estate on which to live. In consequence Clarion's branch of the Lusignan family became and remained impoverished.

The King's love affairs were notorious and caused much scandal and resentment at court. Many noblemen whose honour had been tarnished — and James distributed his amorous favours impartially to wives, daughters, sisters and mothers alike — nursed their wounded pride and waited for their chance to be avenged. But no sooner was a conspiracy hatched in 1470, than it

was betrayed. James bided his time and feigned to be unaware of what was afoot until the day he took the conspirators completely by surprise and had them all arrested. Next day he brought the accused before the High Court. They all admitted their guilt, justifying their actions as being provoked by the reflection cast upon their honour by the King's behaviour; if the King would mend his ways, they would return to their allegiance.

Walter de Nores, he who had refused to renounce his loyalty to Queen Charlotte, argued at the High Court: 'Sirs, the Assize states that the number of conspirators to be condemned should equal the number of wounds on the murdered man; let us count the wounds in this case and then condemn as many murderers.' However, the majority of the Court, condemned the conspirators to death, finding them guilty of the crime of *lèse majesté*.

The next day, blindfolded, the prisoners were carried to the place of execution. Included in the conspiracy was a commoner, Nicolino Constantino, a musician much liked by the noblemen. James had once commanded him to perform a solo and then had him beaten for playing badly. James seems to have interpreted Nicolino's adoption by a group of nobles as an expression of disloyalty and to have wanted to show them all that it was he, the King, who must be the centre of attention. Nicolino bore James a grudge for the humiliating treatment he had suffered and joined the plotters. Nicosia was in an uproar. Mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of the condemned men ran, wailing and lamenting, through the streets. Some of the ladies who had been intimate with the King, and had expected rewards rather than bereavements at his hands, were shocked and desperate. Barred from access to the King, they appealed to his mother, Dame Marietta, and begged her to intercede with her son. Accordingly Marietta, accompanied by a throng of distressed women, went to the palace to plead for the lives of the prisoners; but James had locked himself in his private quarters and the palace was guarded by a strong detachment of troops. Unaccompanied, Marietta managed to get through and, pushing the guards outside the King's chamber, she burst into his presence, fell to her knees and embraced his feet. James refused to yield to her passionate entreaties until he was certain that the hour of execution had passed. He then sent a messenger to announce a reprieve, giving



him as a token a rosary which he took from his own neck. His calculations were only slightly astray: all but three of the condemned had already been beheaded. Among the dead was the musician Nicolino, for whose fate James affected to feel some pity.

In order to survive, James was forced to borrow heavily. Mention has already been made of Andrew Cornaro who had been with Charlotte's supporters during their defence of Kyrenia Castle. At the end of the civil war, Cornaro went over to the side of the victorious James. He lent the King vast amounts of gold and was rewarded with several fiefs as well as various privileges and honours. For a long time Andrew was a regular visitor at the royal palace and a constant companion of James. Although out of favour for a while following the mysterious death of Charla, whom James had betrothed to Sor de Naves, he was later reconciled with the King, who was in continual need of the money that Andrew willingly supplied.

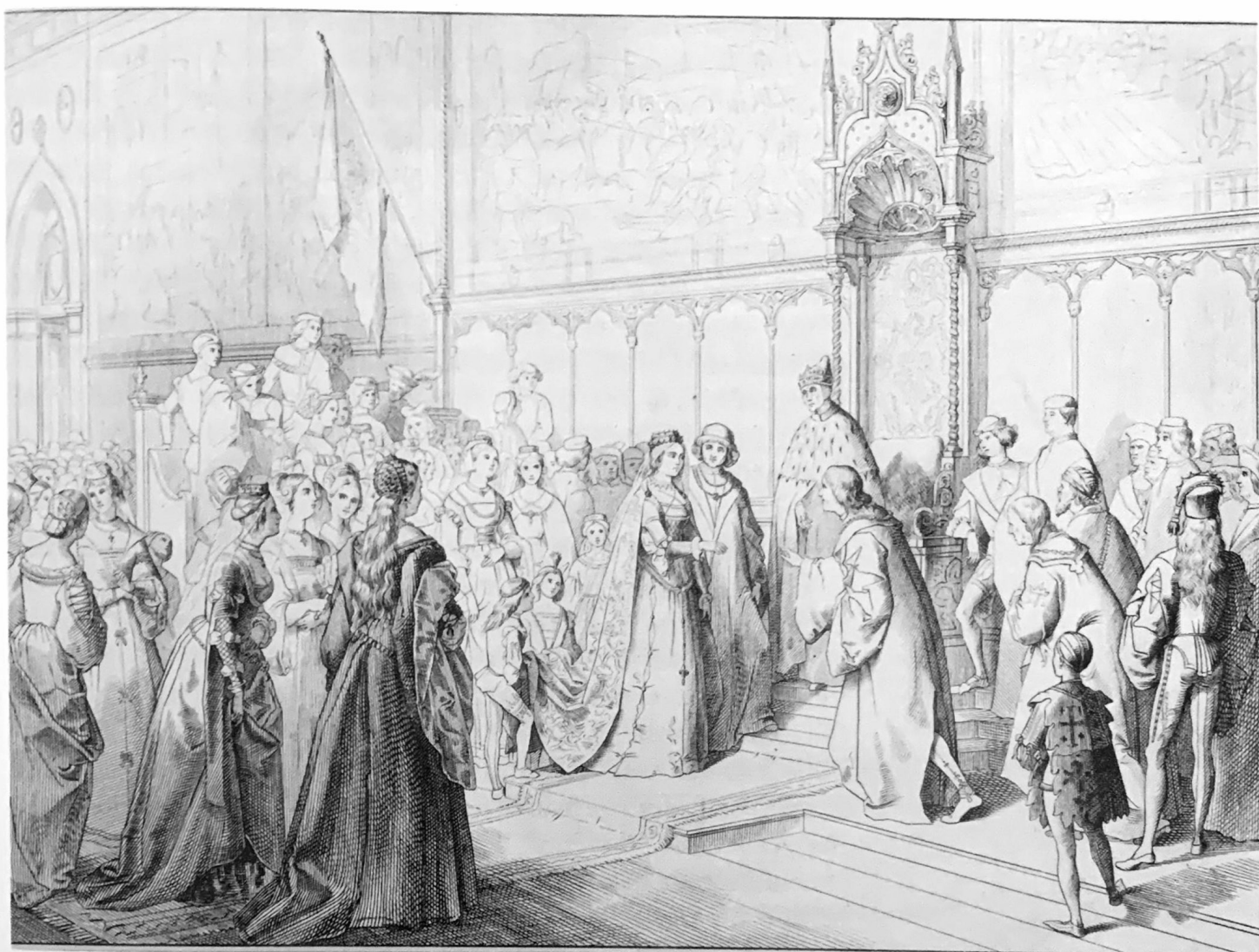
The story goes that one day Andrew Cornaro dropped, as if by accident, a miniature of his niece Caterina in the presence of the King. James picked up the portrait and was much struck by the beauty of the young girl. Be this as it may, a union with Caterina offered many advantages which James could not afford to neglect. Mark Cornaro, her father, was a personal friend of the King, to whom he had often, like his brother Andrew, lent large sums of money. Mark Cornaro's financial interests extended to many ports around the eastern Mediterranean and he was universally respected in the Levant. The Venetian Signory often used his services as an envoy in their dealings with the potentates in that part of the world. The Cornaro family was also rich and prestigious in their native Venice and in the Aegean, where they owned many estates that had come to the family through the large dowry brought by Caterina's mother. Like James himself, Caterina was of Greek descent on her mother's side. The Cornaros were part of the cosmopolitan, Mediterranean society of the period to which James and many of his courtiers also belonged. A connection with this prosperous and powerful family seemed, at the time, the best that James could

hope to achieve. He had been alarmed by reports that the Duke of Milan and the Genoese would band together with the Duke of Savoy and, with the papal blessing, attempt to wrest Cyprus from him. A Venetian alliance was the only protection on the horizon and that alliance could best be secured by marrying into a Venetian family.

Accordingly, in July 1468, James sent his able ambassador, Peter Podocataro, to Venice to ask for the hand of Caterina Cornaro as his wife and Queen. The Senate accepted the proposal in the name of Venice and undertook to adopt Caterina as the daughter of the Republic (*propriam suam filiam adoptivam*), so that her rank and dowry, which was settled at one hundred thousand ducats, might be appropriate to the position of her future husband. There were other reasons for Venice to adopt Caterina as her daughter, the implications of which were to become clear some years later. By taking this step Venice acquired a potential legal claim to Cyprus. If James died without a legitimate heir, his widow would inherit the Kingdom. On her death, Caterina's right to the succession would otherwise be inherited by the Cornaro family, an untenable position since a citizen of Venice was not permitted to become a ruler of a foreign state. This problem was neatly solved by the adoption; the rights of the daughter of Venice would, on her death, automatically pass to the Republic.

As soon as the good news from Venice reached Cyprus, James dispatched Philip Mistachiel as his representative to conclude the formalities of the betrothal. The Doge, Cristoforo Moro, sent the Bucentaur, the state barge, to fetch Caterina from her father's palace, which was situated on the Grand Canal. Escorted by forty ladies of high birth Caterina, then aged fourteen, was brought in procession to the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. There, during a short but solemn ceremony, the Doge handed a consecrated ring to Mistachiel who placed it on Caterina's finger in the name of James of Lusignan, King of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia. Then the cry arose among the congregation and from the joyful throng waiting outside in the piazza of St. Mark. 'Viva Caterina, regina di Cipro.' It must have been a proud and happy occasion for Mark and Fiorenza Cornaro. What thoughts passed through the youthful Caterina's mind as she received the





consecrated ring we do not know. At that time a girl of fourteen, was considered to be of marriageable age. Shakespeare makes Lady Capulet scold her daughter Juliet for not wishing to marry at thirteen, telling her 'by my count/I was your mother much upon these years/That you are now a maid.'

'Caterina Cornaro being married by proxy to James II, King of Cyprus'

G.L. Gatteri, engraved by F. Zanetti

His betrothal to Caterina, the daughter of the Venetian Republic, did not bring peace of mind to the young Lusignan King of Cyprus. James was beset by a variety of problems. Cyprus was undergoing a period of crises in the aftermath of the civil war. Famine and plague did not stop the intrigues of Charlotte's partisans and James had to be constantly vigilant. Nor did his

connection with Venice bring him immediate assistance in his external affairs. James once described himself to a Venetian envoy as being between the jaws of two wolves — *in faucibus duorum luporum* — the Ottoman and the Mameluke sultans. He was well aware that the latter could, at any moment, take his kingdom from him and bestow it upon Charlotte if her gifts and promises appeared more pleasing and profitable than his. The Turks, for their part, were pursuing their conquest of Asia Minor, drawing even closer to Cyprus. James had at first gone to the assistance of the emirs of Karamania (the area of Asia Minor immediately to the north of Cyprus) but after Mehmet, the Conqueror of Constantinople, had firmly secured the whole of Asia Minor in his hands, James entered into negotiations with him, in the hope of maintaining Cypriot independence until such time as he could work out his plans for defence in conjunction with Venice. This was not a simple matter. The Venetians were enemies of the Turks. If James allied himself with them he would become a target for Turkish aggression. Would the Venetians then come to his assistance? James was a tributary of the Mamelukes. If he allied himself with Venice and the Venetians fell out with the Mamelukes, which side should he support in order to ensure his own survival? James never trusted the Venetians, nor did he discount the possibility of their concluding an alliance with his suzerain, the Sultan of Egypt, behind his back. Certainly their eagerness to bring him under their control did not endear them to the proud and independent King of Cyprus.

Thus James was in no hurry to send for his fiancée. In fact he began looking around to see if he could make a better deal with some other Christian state in the West which would protect him from, among other things, the designs of the Serene Republic. James knew that the betrothal is not the same as the sacrament of marriage (and Canon Law does not permit an affianced couple to live as man and wife), although the betrothal ceremony certainly created solemn obligations on both sides, especially in the case of persons of such exalted rank. A betrothal was considered by the Church as a 'trial period' and could be broken off. James now gradually came under pressure from King Ferdinand, who offered him a princess of the royal house of Naples. The new

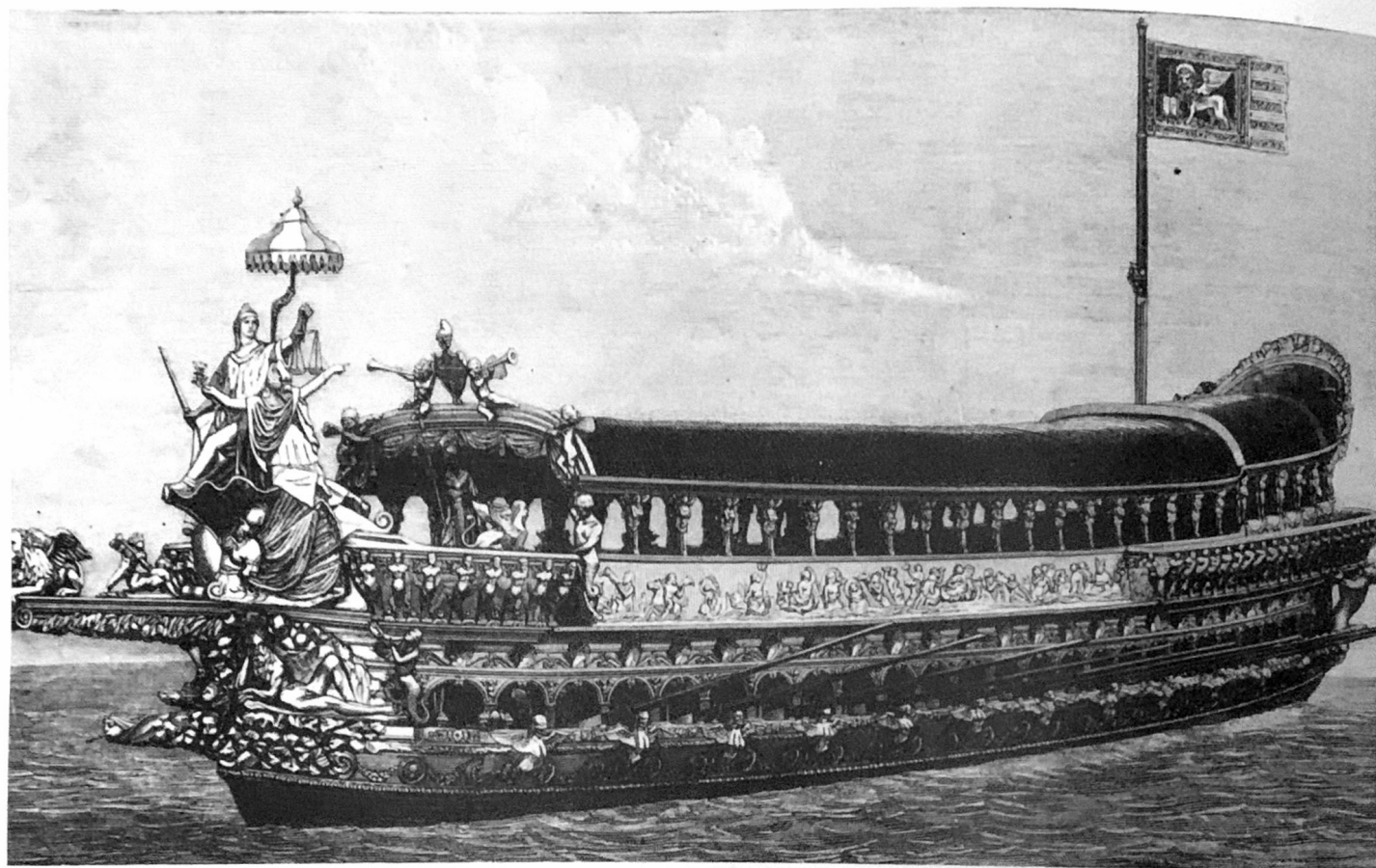


Archbishop of Nicosia, the Catalan Louis Perez Fabregues (successor to William Goneme) and the King's Chamberlain, the Sicilian Rizzo di Marino, strongly urged James to sever his connection with Venice and to accept the overtures of Ferdinand.

When Venice got wind of the rumours linking James with Naples, the Republic's old rival, there was consternation at the Maggior Consiglio and a firm line was adopted. The Senate addressed a letter to James which is still a model of consummate diplomacy, a mixture of threats and promises. The Republic welcomed the King's marriage and considered it to be the closest link between James and themselves, the more so because it had been celebrated in the most solemn manner in the presence of all the leading patricians and the distinguished lady. King James had himself commented with great pleasure on his future marriage to Caterina. The union was not with a single Venetian family but with the Senate and aristocracy of Venice, who would act as one man if she should be subjected to any affront. There were rumours abroad that the King was considering a new marriage. Such a contract would be unworthy of the King's dignity and a betrayal of the longstanding affection the Republic had for James. The betrothal had been formally consecrated in the presence of the King's ambassador, who had full power to represent him, and James could not with honour repudiate it. In order to dispel any further rumours, and at the same time to show proof of his honourable intentions, it was necessary for the King to send for his betrothed immediately.

The Captain-General concluded his mission to James by offering him a defensive alliance. The Republic extended its protection to Cyprus against all Powers, great and small, with the exception of the Sultan of Egypt, while James pledged that he would provide every year two galleys and their crews which, for three to four months of the year, would join the Venetian fleet in the eastern Mediterranean. The King also undertook not to offer any assistance to the enemies of the Republic and not to tax Venetian merchandise in transit through Cyprus.

Once more James prevaricated and another year went by without his making a decisive move when suddenly news reached Cyprus that the Genoese were equipping a fleet. James,



The Venetian state barge, the Bucentaur, after the model preserved in the Arsenal, Venice. The boat was used on several occasions to honour Caterina

fearing that this fleet was intended for the recapture of Famagusta, immediately sent three Cypriot galleys to Venice to bring Caterina to Cyprus. The galleys reached Venice on 14 July 1472, four years after the betrothal. The Signory was greatly pleased with this favourable turn of events and all arrangements were made for Caterina to depart with great pomp and circumstance. Andrew Bragadin was chosen to accompany the bride and to represent the Senate at the wedding ceremony in Cyprus. Bragadin was instructed to emphasise to the King that with this marriage he would be united 'heart and soul' with the Senate and would become related to the entire aristocracy of Venice. A large entourage of Venetians was to accompany Bragadin to Cyprus.

On 14 July 1472, Caterina was formally adopted as the daughter of the Republic in the basilica of St. Mark. In the words of a bystander, Paolo Morosini, 'it seemed that the Signory had won a kingdom, as, by God's grace, did actually happen.' On



19 September 1472, the new Doge, Nicolò Tron, on board the Venetian state barge, the Bucentaur, stopped at the Cornaro palace in S. Paolo to receive the bride, who, attired in a gown of cloth of gold with a long train, sailed with him down the Grand Canal to the Lido, where the ships were waiting to take her to her new home across the sea. Caterina was then eighteen years old and at the height of her beauty. She was of medium stature, with a graceful figure, brilliant, dark eyes and a clear, bright complexion.

According to the final instructions given to Bragadin by the Doge, Caterina was to be treated during the voyage with the honour due to a queen. He was also to inform her that the duty of formally giving her away at the wedding ceremony as the daughter of the Venetian Republic had been assigned to him. To James, the Doge had explained to Bragadin, he should emphasise that the King could do nothing more beneficial for the preservation of his kingdom than to form this union with Venice. The presence of Bragadin at the wedding was intended to underline this truth. In all things, the Doge advised his envoy, he was to act with dignity and decorum. At the Lido, the three Cypriot galleys were joined by four Venetian ships, under the command of Girolamo Diedo.

The marriage was solemnised in Famagusta, in the imposing cathedral of St. Nicholas. One wonders what the first impressions of the sheltered, aristocratic Venetian girl were of the man chosen to be her husband, this handsome stranger who had started his stormy career at the age of seventeen by murdering his father's Chamberlain; who had scaled walls and ridden through the night at the head of a posse of desperadoes; who had outwitted his rivals and killed his enemies in his headlong, ruthless quest for power. What is clear from Caterina's recorded words and from her actions after her husband's death, is that the Queen of Cyprus came to admire and love James. What had started wholly as a marriage of state seems to have developed into a love match.

In Famagusta, Andrew Bragadin handed James a letter from the Senate in which Venice expressed its approval of the King's foreign policy in playing for time with the Turkish Sultan — 'that most rapacious and perfidious ruler, the universal enemy,

who has not and never will have a single friend from whom he will not take state, fortune, or at length life, but only dissembles with one in order to obtain time to crush another.' By a tragic irony of history one hundred years later another Bragadin, a member of the same family, was to defend Famagusta heroically against the Turks and, after hideous mutilations and tortures, to suffer a terrible death at the hands of Lala Mustafa who, breaking the terms of the surrender, had him flayed alive and his skin stuffed with straw and sent as a macabre trophy to Sultan Selim the Sot in Constantinople.

James's relations with the Venetians were not without strain. The King often defaulted on his loan repayments to his Venetian creditors. His pursuit of a kind of non-aligned foreign policy was not always well received by the Venetians, who tended to treat Cyprus like 'part of their own state' as they once expressed it to James. This attitude often meant that the Republic treated Cyprus as Venetian territory in the service of commercial and strategic Venetian interests and ignored James's status as king of the island. When, after the fall of Negroponte to the Turks on 4 July 1470, a league of the Italian city states was formed to counter the Turkish threat, James was not invited to participate. Incensed, he sent an envoy to Venice to ask for an explanation. The Signory tried to appease the King, promising that he would certainly be invited to sign the peace treaty when that should be concluded. James had asked for Venetians to be allowed to emigrate to his depopulated island. The Signory explained to him that it was against all Venetian tradition to send their own citizens as colonists; instead, colonists should be recruited from the Morea and the Greek islands, where the Greek inhabitants were ill-treated by the Turks. In April 1473, James forbade the galleys of Provveditore Peter Soranzo, loaded with munitions, to enter Famagusta harbour, not wishing to give offence to his suzerain, the Sultan of Egypt, who had already complained through the Grand Devitdar that the Venetians were being accorded preferential treatment on the island. When the Venetians pressed him, James lost his temper. In a violent scene he ordered all the Republic's galleys to leave Famagusta within two



hours, threatening that if they did not he would make certain that they were blown out of the water by the cannon on the ramparts and that he would make mincemeat of any crew member found on shore, from captain to cabin boy. The King had, indeed, justifiable cause for complaint. Three months earlier, two Venetian galleys had press-ganged one hundred and fifty Cypriots from some of the coastal regions of the island. Soranzo's ships, he decreed, could use the harbour at Paphos, not that at Famagusta. The Venetians blandly reassured the angry King that their galleys were destined for war against the Turks and entertained no hostile intentions against his suzerain of Egypt.

This was the last occasion on which King James gave vent to his opposition to Venetian presumption. One day in high summer, in late June 1473, he and his court set out from Nicosia to go hunting in the plain near Famagusta. With him were Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo, who was Andrew's nephew and a cousin of Caterina. After the hunt the party made for Famagusta and on the journey James was suddenly seized by what appeared to be a violent attack of dysentery. Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo did not permit anyone to come near him. The Venetian Admiral, Peter Mocenigo, Captain-General of the Sea, Procurator of St. Mark and later to be Doge of Venice, was cruising around the coast of Cyprus, like a watchdog, making certain that no one interfered with the affairs of the island. Mocenigo's ruthlessness and ferocity were well known in the Mediterranean. The previous year, in September 1472, he had attacked Smyrna and his stradiots, mercenary light cavalry recruited in Greece and Albania, had massacred men, women and children and then burnt down the city, a scene that was to be repeated in September 1922, four hundred and fifty years later, by the troops of Kemal Ataturk. When he heard of James's illness, Mocenigo immediately put into Famagusta and went to see the King. The dying King entrusted the care and protection of his kingdom and of Caterina, his widow and successor, to the Venetian Mocenigo. Meanwhile, the barons had sent for the Queen, who was then in her seventh month of pregnancy. When she arrived from Nicosia, they forced their way into the King's chamber, but by then he was sinking fast. In their presence a will

was drawn up. Caterina was to be Lady and Queen of Cyprus until the birth of her child, the King's heir. In the event of the death of this child, James named as next in succession his three illegitimate children, Eugene, John and Charlotte (also known as Charla). After them, the crown was to pass to the nearest Lusignan heir (surprisingly enough, it seems that Clarion of Lusignan whom the King had so savagely mangled, would have been the nearest). In his will, James also set free the galley slaves who crewed his ships; these unfortunates were usually *paroikoi* who had been press-ganged, a widespread practice prevalent during the Middle Ages and for centuries afterwards. As executors and regents of the Kingdom James named the following: John Tafur, now Count of Tripoli and Governor of Famagusta; John Perez Fabregues (brother of the Archbishop), Captain of the Galleys; Morphou de Grenier, Count of Rouchas; Andrew Cornaro, Auditor of Cyprus; John Aregnon (or Aronion); Rizzo di Marino, Chamberlain of Cyprus and lastly, Peter Davila, Constable of Nicosia. George Contarini was appointed Counsellor to the Queen. The regents and the barons took an oath to uphold the provisions of the King's will. Mocenigo assured the stricken King that he would give his wholehearted assistance and support.

On the night of 6 to 7 July 1473, James breathed his last, after a painful illness lasting nine days. He was almost thirty-three years old and he had been on the throne for almost thirteen years. He had always been robust and vigorous and at the time of the ill-fated hunting expedition was in excellent health. After his death the Venetian party at once accused Queen Charlotte's loyalists of having poisoned him. The Catalan party blamed Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo. The strange behaviour of Cornaro and Bembo in not allowing anyone into the presence of the King until he was too weak and far gone to be approachable made these suspicions appear more credible. The Pope, Sixtus IV, was quite convinced that it was the Venetians who had poisoned James. The King was given a simple burial; the last of the Lusignan line in Cyprus was interred with little of the pomp and ceremony usually bestowed on the passing of a king. There were not even candles as there was no wax to be found in Cyprus. On 30 July, Caterina asked for an ancient porphyry



sarcophagus from St. Sophia to be sent to Famagusta, but the church authorities, who had never liked James, refused her request. The corpse was embalmed and placed in a marble sarcophagus before interment in St. Nicholas Cathedral in Famagusta. In the inscription on the tombstone, which was erected later, James's marriage to a Venetian lady of high birth and of 'god-like beauty' was mentioned and his attachment to the Venetian Republic was emphasised. After his death not only were the galley slaves set free, but so too were a number of distinguished individuals who had been languishing in prison, including three survivors of the cuckold's revolt of 1470.

Upon hearing of James's death, the Abbot of Stavrovouni wrote to his brother, 'we have escaped from the fangs of the dog to fall victim to those of the lion.' He was a Catholic abbot and the Roman Church could never stomach James, although he was duly recognised by Pope Paul II (1464-1471), a Venetian, on his betrothal to Caterina. Sathas, the Greek editor of medieval chronicles, calls James the most cunning of tyrants. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries he was a monster of perfidy, crafty and unscrupulous. James was certainly endowed with exceptional qualities and he could be either generous or mean, forgiving or vindictive, as his interests dictated at the time. Cruel and vicious, but only for reasons of state, he could suddenly become kindhearted and considerate. He was unrelentingly hard-hearted in the affair of the cuckolds' revolt. But he took care to import wheat for his famine-stricken subjects and personally took charge of his courtiers' welfare when he moved the court to Akaki to escape the plague. The King's gallantries often caused resentment in court circles, but James, as a genuine lover of women, loved them all, both young and old, and there is every indication that he was loved in return by his mistresses. Caterina, his wife, always spoke of him with affection.

Physically strong, James led his men himself in the field and at sea. Cunning as a fox he was also as brave as a lion. A man of action and a man of subtle words, he liberated Famagusta from the Genoese and removed any threat from that quarter; and he maintained excellent diplomatic relations with his suzerain the



Crowned head from a mural painting in the church of Ayia Napa Monastery

*Opposite*

Ayia Napa Monastery. Although Greek Orthodox, this monastery shows western influence and contains a Latin chapel. It was rebuilt and extended in the fifteenth century

*Overleaf*

Kolossi Castle. This was the headquarters or Commandery of the Knights of St. John. The three-storey keep was built in the fifteenth century. At the end of the century the fief and castle passed into the hands of the Cornaro family and the title remained with them until 1799

Medieval sugar factory on the estate of Kolossi Castle

Sultan of Egypt, to the south so that he could ward off the Turkish threat to the north. In the end the course he took, as he may in his blacker moments have foreseen, resulted in his kingdom falling into the hands of the Venetian Republic, the only Power that was capable of standing up to the Turkish menace. His hypocritical qualities (in the Greek sense of the adjective, meaning histrionic) were unparalleled. He was a born politician, who knew how to act his part; he could fall on his knees and piteously implore; but he could also rage and storm and command absolute obedience. Tall, robust and an expert horseman he was personally brave and would perform feats of striking daring — he was also capable of stabbing his enemy full in the face or of grinding him underfoot in the dust with his spurred feet.

James II was in many respects a typical Renaissance ruler and Machiavelli might well have approved of him. Indeed, in any age, James would have been considered a remarkable man. A Byzantine scholar, a certain Michael Apostolios, writing to a friend, asked for news of 'that noble ruler of Cyprus — I wish him all good fortune — who emulates the ancients both in his manners and in war, my namesake the admirable Apostoles.'

On 7 July 1473, the news of James's death reached Nicosia and, following ancient tradition, all the high officers of the Kingdom gathered to hear Caterina Cornaro proclaimed Queen of Cyprus and to pledge their allegiance. Present were the Venetian Bailie; the Admiral of Cyprus; Paul Chappe; William de Ras, the Viscount of Nicosia; Bishop Nicholas of the Greek community, who officially ranked as deputy or vicar to the Latin Archbishop; the Vicar of the Great Church, Anthony Silvani, and John de Ras, William's son, who had come from Famagusta. Similar ceremonies, pledging allegiance to the new Queen, were held in all the castles of the island. Scenes of great enthusiasm followed the proclamations and the citizens of Nicosia, with whom Caterina had always been popular, desired her to come to the capital in person. On 19 July, as a token of appreciation for their loyalty, Caterina sent them one thousand bushels of wheat, telling them that she could not come to Nicosia at that time, owing to her approaching confinement. On 29 July she sent the Count of Rouchas to express her thanks and promised to come to















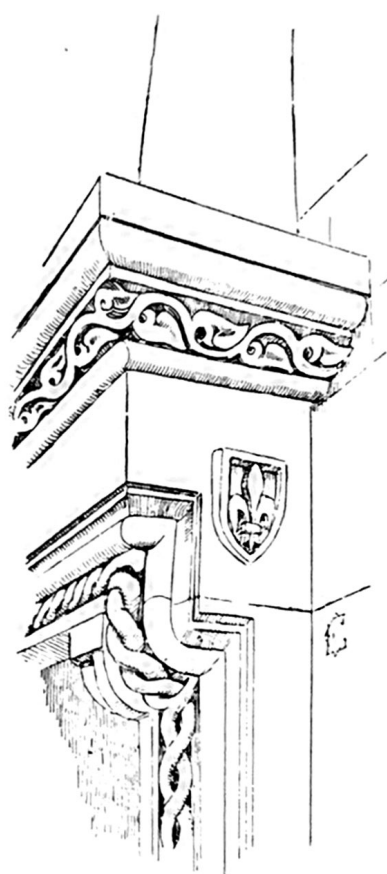




them as soon as she was able. In response, the grateful citizens sent her their greetings and (according to George Bustron) assured her that 'they would obey her commands and would live and die for her good name.' The Count of Rouchas, Morphou de Grenier, went back to Famagusta and was appointed by the Queen Chamberlain of Cyprus, the post he had held during the reign of James II, and then returned to Nicosia, to continue his duties. Peter Davila, who had accompanied the Chamberlain to Nicosia, returned to Famagusta and remained there in order to be near the Queen, sending for his wife and family. This extreme devotion to Caterina would one day send Davila into permanent exile.

At the same time, Caterina sent Andrew Casoli to Egypt to inform the Sultan of her accession to the throne. Charlotte, too, had sent ambassadors to Egypt. Sultan Kaitbai received Caterina's representative with favour and sent her a message that the tribute should be paid immediately; he also demanded a large gift on the occasion of her succession. And he rather meanly delivered Charlotte's ambassadors into the hands of Caterina's. The Sultan also sent a Mameluke envoy to Cyprus to claim any treasure left by the late James II, as being James's suzerain and thus the rightful owner. This rumoured treasure had already been the subject of an extensive inquiry in Cyprus. In his will, James had stated that he was leaving behind a large treasure, which he had amassed with great pains. However, no treasure was found after the King's demise. One Phocas, who had been the King's valet and had been 'very dear to him', was arrested on suspicion of theft. He was interrogated on the rack but revealed nothing. The missing money was reputed to amount to sixty thousand ducats. Caterina then sent a letter to William de Ras, Viscount of Nicosia, requesting him to arrest a certain person in the service of Rizzo di Marino. This man was arrested and taken to Famagusta, but it turned out that he knew nothing of the affair and he was released. Despite strenuous efforts to locate the missing fortune, the mystery of the King's 'treasure' was never solved.

During the months following the King's death a struggle for



Fireplace in Kolossi Castle

#### *Opposite*

At Kouklia, the site of the ancient city of Paphos, there was a Lusignan royal manor in the centre of large plantations of sugar cane. The east wing remains, after the destruction of the rest by the Mamelukes in 1426

power ensued and in public affairs there was great tension and great bitterness. There were many arrests and many interrogations under torture and many executions during this period. On the west coast of Cyprus, a brigantine from Rhodes approached land, anxious to learn more concerning James's death and its aftermath. On the ship was John de Giblet, a staunch supporter of Charlotte. A certain young man named Valentine was put ashore to find out what he could, but he was recognised at Pendayia and arrested as a spy. He was then sent to Famagusta, sentenced to death, beheaded and afterwards quartered. There was an abortive attempt by Charlotte to capture Kyrenia, timed to take place on 15 August, when the whole population would flock to Lapithos in Lambousa and there attend the famous fair. Three monks, who were Charlotte's agents, were arrested and, under torture, betrayed the whole conspiracy. They were defrocked by the Bishop of Limassol and suffered the customary penalty, being beheaded and quartered.

As soon as Charlotte heard the news of James's death, she thought that her chance to win back her throne had come at last. She was then in Rhodes, vainly imploring the Knights of St. John to lend her their fleet in order to invade Cyprus. For this reason the Venetian Captain-General of the Sea, Peter Mocenigo, who was patrolling the waters around Cyprus, had just anchored in the bay of Marmaris, on the coast of Asia Minor across the straits from Rhodes, so as to keep an eye on the movements of the Rhodian fleet and also to remind Charlotte and her supporters of the formidable presence of the Venetian navy. Hoping to discourage Mocenigo from preventing her return to Cyprus, Charlotte sent the Rhodian Admiral, Cristoforo de' Corradi di Liguana, to Marmaris. Mocenigo in his answer explained the policy of Venice in realistic terms. He was prepared to do everything in his power for Charlotte but he was surprised that she did not understand that the possession of kingdoms did not depend on legal claims but on superior force of arms. This was the way of the world. Charlotte had lost her dominion over the whole of Cyprus as the Genoese had earlier lost Famagusta. King James had been a loyal ally of the Venetian Republic and had been in legitimate possession of his kingdom. Charlotte ought to know that Caterina, widow of the late King,



Doge Marco Corner  
(1365-1368), an ancestor  
of Caterina



was the adopted daughter of Venice and that she and her son had been named by James as heirs to the Kingdom. She should therefore seek help against Caterina from some other quarter because he, Mocenigo, as Admiral of Venice, had been entrusted with the duty of protecting Caterina. Mocenigo made it clear that the Signory would defend their adopted daughter against the whole world. Finally, Mocenigo expressed to the Rhodian admiral his displeasure at the sympathy which the Knights of St. John had shown towards Charlotte.

The Signory had first heard of the death of James II through Andrew Cornaro, who assured them that all the nobility and principal officers had sworn fealty to Queen Caterina. Then the Venetian Ambassador, Josafat Barbaro, wrote (on 14 July) to warn them that, despite Andrew Cornaro's assurances, the situation in Cyprus was dangerous because of the Catalan party. On 15 August 1473 Charlotte made her abortive attempt to seize Kyrenia. On 24 August the Senate ordered Captain-General Mocenigo to put in readiness four to six galleys for the protection of Caterina. He was also to ensure that the ports of the island, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Limassol and Paphos, were placed under the direction of trustworthy commanders. When the Senate heard that Archbishop Fabregues had left Naples for Cyprus they sent new orders (on 4 October) to the Captain-General to move his entire fleet to Cyprus if he had information that the Neopolitan admiral was heading for the island.

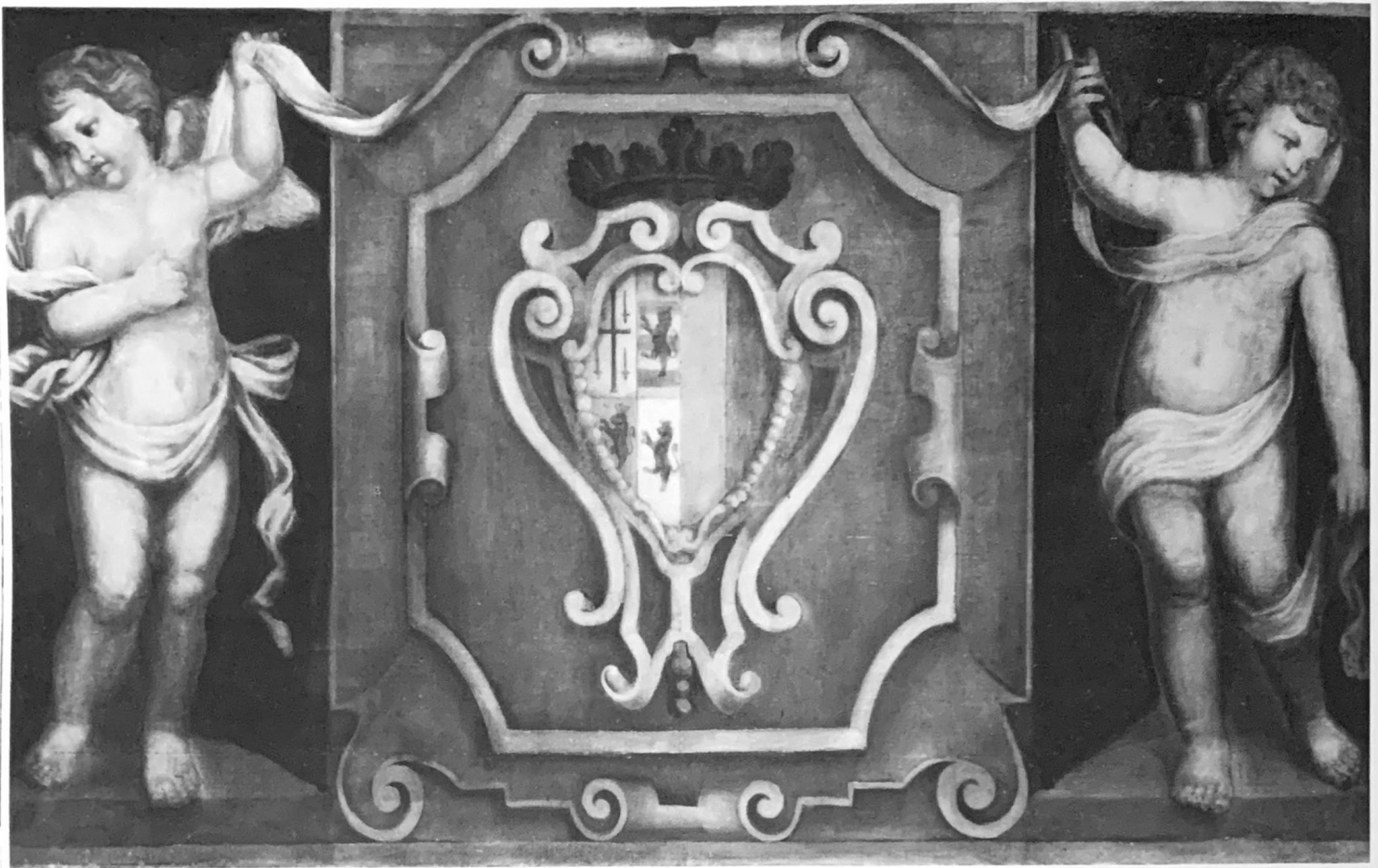
On 28 August 1473 Caterina gave birth to a son, James III of Cyprus. Mocenigo proceeded at once to Famagusta, where the infant King was baptised on 26 September. The ceremony was performed with great pomp and a detachment of the Venetian navy was present. The child had three godfathers: Peter Mocenigo and two provveditori of the Venetian fleet. Also present at the christening were Pasqualigo, the Venetian Bailie on the island, and Josafat Barbaro, the Venetian Ambassador. This massive Venetian presence caused extreme displeasure to the Catalan faction and the barons also were offended at not having been invited to participate in the ceremony. The designs of Venice were now only too apparent and the Catalans and Sicilians, who had fought by James's side and who had, in some cases, been appointed in his will as members of the Council, were annoyed at being excluded from the centre of power. After the christening, Mocenigo again put out to sea.

The news of the death of James II reached the Archbishop of Nicosia, Louis Perez Fabregues, at Naples, where he was negotiating a marriage contract between Charla, James's natural daughter, and Alonzo, King Ferdinand's natural son. Charlotte, in a complicated conspiracy to enable her to return to Cyprus,



had just at this time adopted Don Alonzo. The Archbishop first secured a letter from Pope Sixtus IV urging the Cypriots to reinstate Charlotte on the throne, and then set sail for home, determined to oppose a Venetian takeover of the island. He arrived in Limassol on 10 November with two Neapolitan galleys and an envoy of King Ferdinand. Then he went to Nicosia and proceeded to the Cathedral of St. Sophia where, on the steps, he read out the Pope's letter to the assembled Catalans who had turned out to welcome him. In the letter Sixtus IV openly accused Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo of poisoning the late King. For good measure, the Archbishop also accused Andrew Cornaro of the murder by poisoning of his brother, John Perez Fabregues, Count of Jaffa, leader of the Catalan party, who had died recently under suspicious circumstances. The crowd was greatly incensed by these revelations. By bringing the Pope's letter to Cyprus and reading it aloud, the Archbishop had shown his hand and there could be no turning back. He therefore circulated reports that there was a plot afoot to massacre all the members of the Spanish party on the island. The plot, he alleged, had been hatched by Andrew Cornaro and John Visconti, Captain of the Italian troops. The signal for this massacre to begin, he declared, was to be the sounding of the tocsin. The Catalans, therefore, must be ready to defend themselves. The crowd, by now thoroughly excited, took an oath to kill the murderers of the late King, expel the Venetians and preserve the independence of the Kingdom. The leading figures in the Catalan party retired to the house of James Zaplana, where they decided on a concerted plan of action. Then they rode in a body at the head of their supporters to Famagusta. Meanwhile the two Neapolitan galleys which had brought Archbishop Louis Perez Fabregues from Naples sailed from Limassol, rounded Cape Greco, and anchored at Famagusta, outside the harbour chain.

At the appointed time, three hours before daybreak on 13 November 1473, the tocsin was sounded by a servant at the palace in the pay of the Archbishop, who had circulated the rumour that the tolling of the bell was to signal the massacre of the Catalans. At once a large number of heavily-armed Catalans, Sicilians, Neapolitans and others surged into the streets of



The arms of Caterina  
Cornaro  
(Palazzo Corner)

Famagusta and surrounded the royal palace. The only threat to the revolt was posed by the Venetian soldiers who guarded the residences of the Venetian Bailie, Nicolas Pasqualigo, and the Venetian Ambassador, Josafat Barbaro. Thither, therefore, hastened the leaders of the revolt: Archbishop and Regent Louis Perez Fabrigues; John Tafur, Count of Tripoli, Regent and Governor of Famagusta, James Zaplana, Grand Constable of Cyprus, and Sassons de Nores, Constable of Jerusalem; all demanded that the Venetian troops should be disarmed and their weapons taken to the two Venetian galleys which were anchored in the harbour because, they urged, the Venetians had nothing to fear. They all protested their loyalty to the Queen and their goodwill and friendly feelings towards Venice. The present uproar, they reassured Pasqualigo and Barbaro, was occasioned by a purely local dispute; the soldiers were up in arms because they had not been paid. There was no need for Venetian intervention. The only one of the ringleaders of the revolt who



did not take the time to visit the Venetian representatives was the redoubtable Chamberlain of Cyprus, Rizzo di Marino, who had instead placed himself at the head of the armed Catalan rebels and taken command of military operations.

When Peter Gurri heard the tocsin he armed himself and went to the house of Paul Chappe, Seneschal of Jerusalem. Gurri found Chappe in bed. 'My Lord, don't you hear the bell? Get up and let's go to the palace to find out what's happening. After all, it is our duty to do so.' They set off on horseback; following them on foot was a friend, John Cappadokes. When they arrived at the palace Louis Alberic stepped in front of them and said to Chappe: 'Come in, I want to talk to you.' As he was entering the front courtyard, Chappe saw Cortesi and called to him, 'give me your hand and help me dismount.' Cortesi replied, 'there is no need for you to dismount.' At that moment, the ubiquitous Rizzo di Marino stepped forward and ran Chappe through the body with his dagger so violently that the blade emerged on the other side. Gurri whipped up his horse and escaped into the night. The conspirators dragged Chappe, bleeding profusely, to a deep well nearby and cast him in, to die in agony several hours later. In the well there were already the corpses of two previous victims.

Then the rebels forced their way into the palace. Master Gabriel Gentile, the Queen's personal physician and confidant, had witnessed the murder of Chappe and rushed in terror to the Queen's chamber to warn her and seek shelter. He was discovered there by the Archbishop, who did not recognise him and asked him mockingly: 'Why are you with the Queen — for company?' At that moment, Rizzo burst into the apartments and shouted to Gentile: 'So here you are, traitor!' In an incident oddly reminiscent of the murder of the musician David Rizzio, who attempted to shelter behind his patron, Mary, Queen of Scots, the unhappy Gentile sought safety behind Caterina's skirts. 'Sir Rizzo, leave him alone!' pleaded the Queen. The Sicilian desperado was not to be appeased; dragging Gentile away from the Queen, he stabbed him twice. But the doctor, who had heard the tocsin and was wearing a coat of chain-mail, was not wounded; whereupon Rizzo grabbed him by the hair and swordbelt and dragged him out of the Queen's apartments. Panic

lending him strength, Gentile managed to break away and run to the other wing of the palace; there he hid behind a cupboard in one of the kitchens, but he was soon discovered, pulled out, and, screaming for mercy, hauled before Rizzo. 'What harm have I ever done you that you should want to kill me?' he shrieked. In reply, Rizzo lifted up Gentile's coat of mail and stabbed him in the stomach.

The Venetians in Famagusta were taken completely by surprise. On hearing the alarm Andrew Cornaro rose from his bed at once, calling to his servants to find out what was going on. Leaning out of the windows they saw large crowds thronging into the palace courtyard and armed men ascending the palace steps. When Andrew was brought word of this, he dressed and armed himself and, taking with him his nephew, Mark Bembo, he set off for the palace. When they learned that old Chappe and Gabriel Gentile had been murdered and saw the armed Catalans surrounding the palace, they turned back and made for the house of the Venetian Bailie, Nicholas Pasqualigo, to ask for an escort. On the way, they met John Tafur, who advised them to return home, but Andrew and Mark Bembo pressed on hurriedly. They found the Bailie conferring with Josafat Barbaro, the Venetian Ambassador. Andrew tried to persuade them to go with him to the palace, escorted by the Bailie's Italian troops, but the two Venetian representatives, having been assured by John Tafur that the Queen was safe and warned that it would be dangerous for them to go into the streets, refused to do so. Then Andrew, on horseback, with Mark Bembo on foot, proceeded, not to the palace as he had originally intended, but to the castle, hoping to find refuge there. However, the Castellan, Ferrandetto di San Luca, would not let them in. 'My Lords,' he called from the ramparts, 'I have orders, on pain of death, not to admit anyone except the Queen herself.' Later, when interrogated on the rack, the Castellan divulged that it had been Rizzo di Marino and John Tafur who had given him those orders. When he had asked them in return whether he should open the gate if any of the regents so commanded — and Andrew Cornaro was one of the regents — he was told that he should not open unless the Regent came with the Queen in person. In his testimony, according to George Bustron, the Castellan added that when Andrew had



come that night he had explained his orders to him. Andrew had argued for a long time, but 'I could not betray our Lady.'

Andrew Cornaro, now thoroughly aware that sedition was afoot and that he was surrounded by his enemies, dismounted and retreated behind an outwork of the castle and waited there with his nephew. He was the prime target for the rebels and when he could not be found either at his house or at the Bailie's or at the palace, Rizzo di Marino came to the castle at the head of a posse and called to the Castellan, enquiring if any one had sought admittance to the citadel. The Castellan told him that Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo had wanted to enter but he had refused to open. Where had they gone? To the outer moat, he replied. Then John Tafur called out Andrew's name and Andrew responded to the hail. The count shouted to him again: 'Friend, come here! The Queen wishes to see you.' As Andrew approached them on foot Casoli, the Viscount of Famagusta, offered him his own horse out of deference. Suddenly, out of the darkness, stepped Rizzo di Marino, cursing them all in a stream of foul language and insultingly offering Andrew a pack horse to ride. Among the search party of twelve men who had been combing the city for Cornaro that night was Tristan de Gible. John Tafur, well knowing what was to follow, put spurs to his horse and galloped off, calling to Andrew: 'I'll go ahead. You come with Rizzo.' 'I'll come with you,' Andrew called after him. On hearing this, Rizzo dealt him a heavy blow on the head with the flat of his sword which felled him to the ground. The other rebels closed in and finished him off. According to the testimony of two of the conspirators, who were later interrogated on the rack and hanged for their part in the deed, Andrew Cornaro was stabbed ten times before he died. A ring he was wearing would not come off, so one of the assassins cut off his finger. Mark Bembo was also struck down. At some point the victims were stripped of their armour and rich garments and the two bodies were thrown naked into the castle moat, where, according to one account 'they lay many days within sight of the Queen's windows'. Later, on the strength of the Castellan's accusations, John Tafur, Count of Tripoli, was arrested and sent to Venice in chains.

For the next six weeks, during which the rebels held sway over

Cyprus, Queen Caterina was confined to the palace in Famagusta, isolated and under strict guard. The rebels seized her treasure chest and her jewels, together with the silver plate of the late King, and demanded money from her to meet the expenses of the state. Rizzo di Marino took one thousand ducats to pay his men; altogether he and the Count of Jaffa are alleged to have pocketed sixty thousand. The Archbishop took possession of the royal seal — he had need of it, as he had many letters of state to write. The rebels explained to Caterina that her uncle Andrew and her cousin Mark Bembo had been killed by mutinous Cypriot soldiers who had not received their pay, and they forced her to write to the Signory confirming this account. The Queen was completely in the hands of the Catalan party and she was not allowed to receive any visitors without one of the regents being present. The wily Archbishop stood by her side most of the time, pretending to consult her and carry out her wishes. Caterina was even made to appear in public with the regents, to give the impression that all was well with the Kingdom and that she was on the side of the new regime. Meanwhile, the rebels were very anxious that Venice should not react unfavourably to the developments in Cyprus. Again they visited the Venetian representatives to protest their innocence in the murder of Andrew Cornaro and to give fresh assurances of their devotion to the Queen and their attachment to Venice. Caterina was coerced into appointing Philip Podocataro as the Ambassador of Cyprus to the Serene Republic. On his appointment this very able Cypriot diplomat was given the house and the two villages which had belonged to Master Gentile. Caterina agreed to everything, signed everything, playing for time while awaiting the arrival of the Venetian fleet.

Next the rebels took away from Caterina her infant son, then barely three months old, and entrusted him to the care of his paternal grandmother, Marietta of Patras. James III was the legitimate King of Cyprus and therefore a very valuable property for whichever party could gain control of the young child's destiny. According to the late King's will, if his legitimate son should not survive, his three illegitimate children, John, Eugene and Charla, would become the next in line to the throne. The motives of the rebels soon became clear. In the palace a few days



later, in Caterina's presence and with her enforced consent, they announced the betrothal of Charla, the natural daughter of James II, to Don Alonzo of Naples; Charla was then six years old and Alonzo was eight. His father, King Ferdinand, was an implacable foe of Venice with long-term designs on Cyprus. He was also glad to arrange for his bastard son to leave Naples, where the boy was detested by the Queen and the legitimate children. Alonzo was expendable. If he could be used to promote the interests of Naples, so much the better. What is even more interesting he had recently been adopted by Charlotte, the deposed Queen of Cyprus. If Charlotte could not come back by herself to claim her own, then she would come back through her adopted son.

The rebels controlled Famagusta and Nicosia; but Kyrenia, with its formidable castle, was under the command of Paul Contarini, the Queen's cousin. On the day after the uprising, Caterina summoned the Venetian Bailie and in the presence of the Archbishop, the Count of Tripoli and Rizzo di Marino, addressed him with tears in her eyes. 'My Lord Bailie, we have sent for you because these regents wish to remove our cousin, Paul Contarini, from Kyrenia — for what reason we do not know.' Pasqualigo expressed his surprise and wondered aloud how the regents could act in such a way against someone who was a loyal servant and a Venetian nobleman. The rebels assured the Queen and the Bailie that the proposed removal of Contarini was for the sole purpose of calming the agitated populace. Already the Neapolitan Louis Alberic, nephew of James Zaplana, had gone to Kyrenia the previous day — the day of the revolt — and demanded from Paul Contarini, the surrender of the castle. Contarini said that he was not going to hand over the castle to a foreigner, who had neither wife nor children nor property in Cyprus. Now, after receiving a letter signed by the Queen herself, he surrendered the castle to Nicholas Morabito, Viscount of Nicosia, according to the Queen's orders. However, Morabito was accompanied by Louis Alberic, to whom he transferred the command, and he himself went to Famagusta. Paul Contarini was to be punished later by Admiral Mocenigo for his gullibility.

Caterina was not without friends and supporters, although

they were unable to come to her rescue until the Venetian intervention one month and a half later. One of the Queen's most devoted subjects was Peter Davila, the Constable of Nicosia. As Constable he commanded a small force of Cypriot troops and was a man to be reckoned with. He had been named as one of the regents in James II's will; when the King died, he had won over the people of Nicosia to Caterina and thereafter the citizens of the capital always remained loyal to her. Peter Davila himself was unswerving in his devotion to Caterina and the Catalan party tried various stratagems in an attempt to destroy him. James Zaplana tried to instigate a revolt among his men over unpaid wages. Louis Alberic produced an order commanding him to leave his troops in Nicosia and report to Famagusta because he had incurred 'the greatest displeasure of the Queen'. Davila ignored these ploys but, sensing something was amiss, he set off for Famagusta at the head of a Cypriot force of Franks and Greeks. On the road, a certain Ringo, coming from the opposite direction, informed him that earlier that day, three hours before daybreak, Andrew Cornaro, Mark Bembo, Gabriele Gentile and Paul Chappe had been assassinated. The man had no other information to give. Peter Davila marched on to Famagusta. At the end of the day, he entered the city. He had come too late. The palace and the castle and the ramparts were in the hands of the Catalan party. His troops were outnumbered and powerless. Davila forced his way to the palace alone and found the Queen sequestered, under heavy guard, and unable to communicate freely with any of the Venetians in the city. He stayed on in Famagusta in case the opportunity arose to serve his royal mistress in the hour of danger. When the rebels insisted that she should show herself to the public in their company, he rode beside her and was never far from her side — going one Sunday to the Catholic cathedral of St. Nicholas for a Latin Mass, the following Sunday to the Orthodox cathedral of St. George of the Greeks for a Greek Mass.

Ever since the death of James II, the Venetian Senate had been closely following events on the island, firm in their resolve to allow no interference in the affairs of Cyprus and to protect and



defend at all costs their adopted daughter, Queen Caterina. To assist the permanent Venetian representative on the island, Bailie Pasqualigo, the Senate had also sent Josafat Barbaro as their ambassador. The fortunes of the Kingdom they entrusted to 'their man' on the island, the resourceful and ruthless Andrew Cornaro, the Queen's uncle. On 17 July 1473, Josafat Barbaro wrote to the Senate to inform them that, although Andrew Cornaro had assured him that all the nobles and officials of the late King had sworn fealty to Caterina, he himself considered that the situation on the island was dangerous because of the machinations of the Catalan party. When the Senate learned that Archbishop Fabregues had left Naples for Cyprus, they sent orders on 4 October 1473 to the Captain-General of the Sea, instructing him to take all his fleet to Cyprus if the Neapolitan fleet should sail towards the island. As only two Neapolitan galleys accompanied the Archbishop, the Provveditore Victor Soranzo sailed towards Cyprus with a squadron of ten ships, the vanguard of the Venetian fleet, arriving at Famagusta on 24 November. His galleys were unable to enter the port because of the harbour chain and the cannon on the battlements, but instead he blockaded Famagusta, not allowing any of his men to go ashore. The rebels conferred and finally sent the Archbishop to negotiate with the Provveditore. The Venetians demanded the surrender of the fortress and cities of Famagusta and Kyrenia. The Archbishop replied: 'My Lords, you are demanding something you cannot have, because the late King left a will appointing regents of the Kingdom, who cannot act differently from the instructions he left them.' The Archbishop returned to land, but none of Soranzo's ships were allowed to enter the harbour. A week later, however, on 30 November, Peter Davila raised the harbour chain and a force of seven hundred soldiers from Soranzo's galleys succeeded in landing. When from her window in the palace Caterina saw the ten Venetian galleys anchored side by side in the harbour, with the bright flag of St. Mark flying from the tall masts, she was overjoyed. She managed to smuggle out of Famagusta a message to Nicosia, where the citizens were devoted to her, bidding them illuminate the city and ring the bells joyfully night and day until the hour of deliverance.

For the entire month of December 1473, the Catalans and Venetians observed an uneasy truce. The Venetians were waiting for the arrival of the rest of their navy; the rebels were waiting with far less confidence for the arrival of the Neapolitan fleet. By the end of December news reached Cyprus that Mocenigo, the Admiral of the Venetian fleet, was sailing at full speed towards Cyprus. Seeing the Venetians closing in on them, the rebels lost their nerve. Gathering together as much gold and silver and other valuables as they could lay their hands on Archbishop Louis Perez Fabregues, James Zaplana, Rizzo di Marino and Louis Alberic, with many of their lieutenants, boarded a Neapolitan vessel during the night of 31 December and put out to sea. Two Venetian galleys were at once sent after them, while orders were issued in the city for the arrest of the rebels' families and household retainers. The next day, a certain Alfonso, bastard son of Carceran Suares, who was in the service of Zaplana, related what had happened. The Archbishop and Rizzo had left Famagusta and gone to meet Zaplana on the shore. As soon as they left, the city gate was firmly closed behind them. They had dismounted and left the horses free. Zaplana asked Alfonso if he wanted to come with him, but the young man refused. Then Alfonso helped Zaplana to take off his breastplate and helmet, which he threw into the boat, together with a small amount of silver that Alfonso always kept about him for Zaplana's use. Alfonso then bade his master goodbye. Zaplana told him: 'Go to my house and tell my lady to have courage. I have nothing more to say.'

Mocenigo, the Captain-General of the Sea, took sweeping measures to confront the Cyprus crisis. It was the depth of winter, but this did not deter him from requisitioning all Venetian galleys as well as all troop transports in the eastern Mediterranean and dispatching them to Cyprus. He strengthened the land forces at his disposal by embarking a body of stradiots from the Morea and a detachment of archers from Crete. He gave orders that all Venetian captains who came into Greek waters should sail immediately to Cyprus to give assistance, on pain of death and seizure of the ships' freight if they



failed to do so. Modon, (Methoni in Greek) the Venetian naval base at the tip of the western finger of the Peloponnese, must have been a hive of activity in the winter of 1473-1474. However when Mocenigo arrived in Cyprus he found all quiet. After the rebels had fled Peter Davila drew in the chain at the port of Famagusta and invited Victor Soranzo, the Provveditore, to come ashore and present himself before the Queen. At the conclusion of the audience Davila gave a banquet in honour of the Provveditore, his captains, and the Venetian Bailie to which the Counts of Roucha and Tripoli were also invited. At the banquet Davila placed the Kingdom of Cyprus in the hands of the representatives of 'the most illustrious Signory of Venice, the mother and protectress of the Queen and her son, the King.' The island, he assured them, was as free as the piazza of St. Mark in Venice and he requested the Venetians to take over the fortresses, which were all under his control. Soranzo and his men, in close co-operation with Davila and his Cypriot soldiers, proceeded to maintain law and order and the authority of Caterina was fully re-established throughout the Kingdom. But as long as the rebels were at large there was danger. They might join forces with Charlotte and return with the Neapolitan fleet. They might stir up trouble at the court of the Sultan of Egypt, the suzerain of the island. They might incite the Pope to help them; Sixtus IV was a Piedmontese and hated the Venetians.

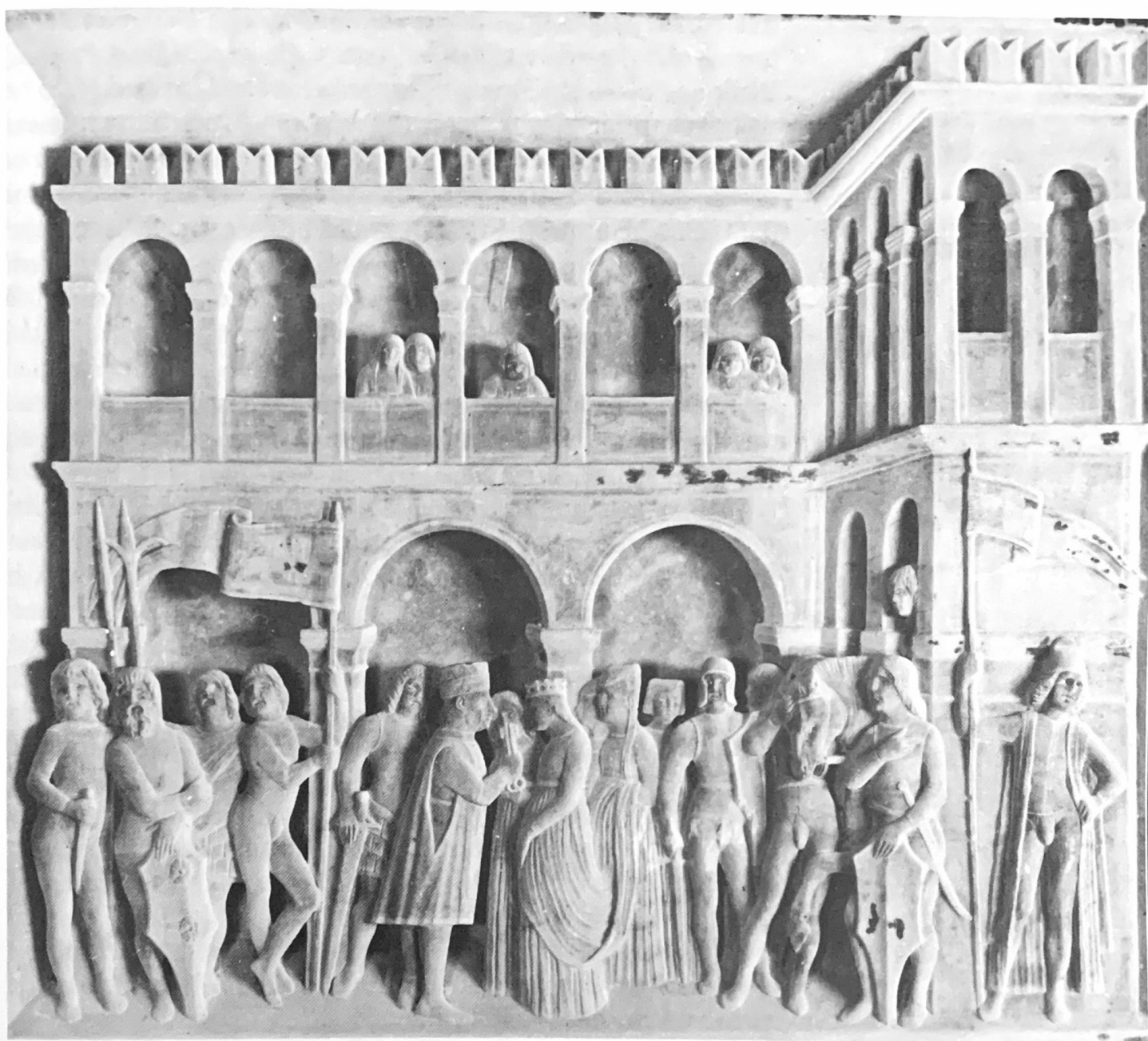
News reached Cyprus that the Neapolitan galleys which had spirited the rebels away from the island had called at Rhodes. Mocenigo immediately put out to sea again. On his arrival at Rhodes he sent a message to the Grand Master, demanding the surrender of Archbishop Louis Perez Fabregues and his companions. The Turkopolier (i.e. commander of the light infantry), John Weston, and a knight of the Order named de Beaumur came to the Venetian Admiral's flagship to welcome him. The Grand Master sent refreshments on board as well as a message to the effect that Rhodes was subject to the Holy See and that all Christians from all nations could take refuge there. It was contrary to the constitution of the Order to hand over the Cypriots, even if they were criminals. The Archbishop was under the jurisdiction of the Roman Curia and as for the other fugitives they had either fled or hidden away after their arrival in

Rhodes and could not be found. Mocenigo repeatedly demanded that the Order, as an ally of Venice, should no longer offer asylum to Cypriots who were enemies of the Republic, but to no avail. He left empty-handed, but, perturbed by the Captain-General's visit, the Grand Master quietly advised his Cypriot guests to leave Rhodes at the first opportunity. Before the Archbishop left for Naples he supplied him with a letter recommending him to all members and subjects of the Order of St. John. While out of Cyprus Fabregues still received the revenues from his See of Nicosia, which were collected and sent to him by the Bishop of Limassol. The Venetian Senate put a price on the head of Rizzo di Marino; five thousand ducats dead or ten thousand alive.

While Mocenigo was at Rhodes, he heard the news of more trouble in Cyprus and so speedily returned. Finding it a false alarm, his next action was to hold a grand military review at Famagusta in the presence of the Queen. At the ceremony, Caterina presented him with a golden shield emblazoned with the arms of the Lusignans. After the celebrations, the stradiots were sent back to the Morea and the archers to Crete.

It took well over a month for the news of the Catalan revolt to reach Venice. On 20 December the first dispatch from Josafat Barbaro arrived on the galley of Nicholas Pesaro. On the same galley Philip Podocataro was travelling as a special ambassador for the rebels, carrying a letter signed by the Queen but actually written by the Archbishop, in which the Catalan version of events was presented. It did not take long for the Senate to compare the two accounts and to arrive at the correct conclusion. Podocataro was declared *persona non grata* and ordered to quit Venetian territory within six hours. The same day that the news from Cyprus arrived the Senate ordered Mocenigo, Captain-General of the Sea, to sail at once to the island with the entire fleet; Caterina and the Kingdom of Cyprus must be protected at all costs against all enemies and be preserved as a special domain of the Republic. To this end the Senate gave Mocenigo extraordinary powers and explicit instructions. No method should be neglected for safeguarding Caterina and securing the lawful inheritance of the infant James III, should he still be alive. If anything should happen to the Queen and her son the Kingdom





should not be allowed to pass into the power of any other state and, if it did, it must be retaken and brought back 'under our protection and to freedom.' The Captain-General of the Sea should prevent the landing of any foreign troops in Cyprus, if necessary by force; he should also use force to prevent any marriage contract being made with Naples. The castles and fortresses of Cyprus should be put into Venetian hands. The authorities in the island should be informed that they would be

Peter Mocenigo offers the keys of Famagusta to the Queen after delivering the city from the rebels. Relief on his sarcophagus; by Pietro Lombardo and his sons Tullio and Antonio (S. Zanipolo, Venice)

treated fairly if they acted in accordance with the demands of justice and the wishes of the Signory. (Like all Great Powers, Venice considered a commitment to herself and to freedom to be the same thing; justice and the wishes of the Signory were synonymous.) The Republic was not vindictive and, if the assassins mended their ways, their version of their motives for the killing of Andrew Cornaro would be regarded as 'adequate' by the Signory. In the meantime reinforcements were being sent to Cyprus. The Venetian representatives should not hesitate to use force if necessary to ensure that the castles came under the command of Venetian castellans and be garrisoned by Venetian soldiers. Next day the Senate sent Mocenigo new instructions to enlist six hundred stradiots in Greece and to dispatch them, with two thousand mercenary infantrymen, to Cyprus. Five days later further instructions from Venice authorised Mocenigo to bribe the commanders of Famagusta and Kyrenia to hand over their fortresses. He could offer five thousand ducats, which could, if necessary, be increased to ten thousand to each commander, and furthermore promise them an annual pension for life of five hundred to one thousand ducats, if they were willing to hand over their commands. To Constable Peter Davila the Captain-General was empowered to promise an annual bonus of one thousand ducats in addition to his pay if he agreed to side with the Queen — something which he had, in fact, already freely done. At the same time the vast amount of twenty-six thousand ducats was put at Mocenigo's disposal to be used in the course of his mission to Cyprus.

Equally swift and skilful were the diplomatic moves of the Republic over the affair. On 21 December 1473, as soon as the news of the revolt reached Venice, the Senate instructed its envoy in Naples to inform King Ferdinand that the Venetians were well aware that the Archbishop Louis Perez Fabregues was responsible for the trouble in Cyprus, but they could not bring themselves to believe that the King himself had had any hand in the matter, bearing in mind the good relations prevailing between the Republic and the Kingdom of Naples. Ferdinand, however, should be careful not to encourage any seditious persons in his kingdom. For his part, Ferdinand protested his innocence and complete ignorance. If there was anything he



could do to help restore order, he promised, he would do it. The Senate put up a suave show of never having suspected Ferdinand of involvement, but the message to the King was clear: if he really wanted to help, he should prevent any Neapolitan galleys from sailing to Cyprus. The animated correspondence went on for some time. When Ferdinand expressed the wish that those regents of Cyprus who had escaped should be reinstated, the Senate replied that several of them were already dead and that King James's will had not stipulated that their positions were to be hereditary or that successors should be appointed. When it became known that the Catalan rebels had fled from Cyprus, the Senate, in a gesture of high diplomacy, wrote to Ferdinand to congratulate him on the outcome, which, they blandly observed, must be as gratifying to him as to themselves. At the same time the Senate wrote to Mocenigo, informing him that King Ferdinand, in friendly letters, had expressed the desire to co-operate in restoring order on the island. Such co-operation, they stressed, was not desirable; if any Neapolitan galley should appear, then Mocenigo should prevent it from approaching the Cyprus coast. The Venetian forces were quite sufficient to carry out the task in hand. In letters from Famagusta dated 6 and 15 February 1474, Mocenigo stressed to the Signory that 'the Kingdom, which had been at the edge of a precipice, had now been returned to peace without a blow being struck.' Mocenigo also advised the Signory that Paul Cōntarini, who had been reinstated in his position of Commander of Kyrenia Castle by the Queen, should be dismissed because he had shown weakness and gullibility in handing over the fortress to the rebels solely on the strength of a letter which Caterina had been forced to write; it was necessary to make an example of him. By June Mocenigo had returned to Modon in the Morea. His swift, decisive, masterly handling of the Cyprus situation was soon to make him Doge of Venice.

The Republic now had a free hand and far-reaching governmental changes were introduced. Any official even remotely inimical to Venice was replaced. All those considered likely to oppose the new status quo were transferred to Venice. All foreigners and all suspicious persons were banished. Venetian

commanders and garrisons took over the fortresses and cities throughout the island. There was also a proposal to settle a colony of one hundred Venetians in Cyprus to act as a kind of local militia, but this scheme came to nothing because of financial problems. The Senate appointed a Provveditore and two Counsellors as permanent residents to assist Caterina in her government. These officials soon assumed complete authority and gathered all power into their own hands, to the great consternation and annoyance of the Queen. Elaborate instructions were given to the Counsellors and the Provveditore concerning their duties; the latter commanded all forces on the island. The three Venetians were appointed for two years on an annual salary of two thousand, four hundred ducats, half of it being kept back in Venice as caution money, according to Venetian custom. Each of them also had to maintain eight servants and six horses. For the first year Venice would pay their expenses and thereafter the Cyprus Treasury would pay. The Counsellors and the Provveditore were not allowed to act as agents, take part in any trade or business, accept any gift or grant any concessions. The first Provveditore chosen by Venice was John Soranzo, brother of Victor. The first Counsellors were Francis Minio and Louis Gabriel.

On 4 June 1474, instructions were issued to these officials. They were to act always with tact and discretion. They should allow nothing to take place without their own recommendation and approval, but everything should be done to create the impression that all orders were issued by the Queen, 'so that everything may appear to proceed from her.' Caterina was to remain a figurehead, but an exalted one: 'It is our intention that the royal name should be acclaimed everywhere.' The two Counsellors and the Provveditore must endeavour to increase the resources of the island, pay the troops punctually and put the finances of the country on a sound footing. Revenues of all kinds must be carefully collected and they should put a stop to the squandering of public property, which had taken place most noticeably after the death of James II. Without causing a scandal, they should see to it that these estates and revenues reverted to the royal domain. Political institutions and the administration should remain as they were. Justice was to be



impartial and the administration of the law was to be carried out according to the Assizes, so that the nobility should remain under the impression that they still had a share in the administration of the state. Old customs and practices were to be preserved as far as possible, to please the people. The two Counsellors and the Provveditore were also entrusted with the task of purging the island of all suspects, whether they belonged to the Spanish party or Charlotte's party. The two Counsellors had always to reside wherever the Queen was in residence, but the Provveditore was free to travel round the island to inspect the troops; he should always speak in the Queen's name and always appear to be acting under her authority. Neither the Provveditore nor the Counsellors were permitted to accept fiefs or any other kind of financial benefit not to engage in any form of trade on the island. The Counsellors had precedence over the Provveditore while the Bailie, as the senior diplomatic representative of the Republic, took precedence over them all. Decisions on important matters could only be taken by this 'Board of Three'. New instructions from the Senate were issued on 29 July to the effect that the castles were to be provided at all times with supplies and provisions sufficient for a period of two years; the soldiers were to be paid punctually in order to remove any temptation to robbery and looting; the 'Board of Three' should take firm measures to prevent any repetition of the disgraceful conduct of certain captains who had in the past press-ganged Cypriot *paroikoi*, about which practice the late King had bitterly complained. Extra care should be employed to ensure the safety of the Queen and her son, the youthful King; their relatives were strictly forbidden to interfere in the government.

The designs of the Serene Republic on the island were now more apparent. The Catalan revolt provided a heaven-sent opportunity for Venice to transform the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus into a Venetian colony. The policy pursued was a cold-blooded one of uprooting and eliminating all other western national groups and holding down the native Greek-Cypriot population under the iron claws of the Lion of St. Mark. Despite the assurances of the Senate that they would consider the assas-

sinations that occurred during the rebellion as a private matter, an order was published on 8 January 1474 which banished all Catalans, Sicilians and Neapolitans from the island. The property of all banished persons was confiscated. Several foreigners who had played a direct part in the rebellion were hanged. It was a bloody and fearful time. A tribunal was formed consisting of Mocenigo, Victor Soranzo, the Provveditore, George Contarini, the Count of Rouchas, Constable Peter Davila and Thomas Ficard, to rid the island of all undesirables. In all walks of life there was a systematic purge of all persons connected with the rebellion. All the Cypriots or Franco-Cypriots in positions of authority were replaced by Venetians, whose allegiance was first to Venice. At least eighty of the leading rebels had fled, but many others were arrested and incarcerated in the castle at Famagusta or, in the case of the most dangerous, in the Venetian galleys anchored offshore. The rack was kept busy and so were the axe and the rope, as prisoners were interrogated and put to death. All followers of the Spanish party were severely punished; those arrested were executed or imprisoned and their villages, estates, houses and other possessions distributed as rewards amongst those persons who had proved loyal to Venice.

From early in 1474 various new measures were introduced by stages to ensure that there would be no further disturbances. No crew members from the Venetian galleys were allowed to sleep ashore; all were required to stay at their posts on full alert. On 6 February an order from the Queen forbade anyone to bear arms, although this measure was revoked on 20 February. The fortresses were all placed in the hands of the Venetians. The Castellan of Famagusta Castle, Galimberto, who had replaced Ferrandetto on 21 January, was now, in his turn, replaced on 6 March by a Venetian. On the same day ten Italian officers were sent to Kyrenia to replace the Cypriot keepers of the castle. On 13 March the Cypriots who guarded the Queen's bedchamber were replaced by Italians. Also on 13 March the captain of the arsenal, the Frenchman John Franzosi, was succeeded by the Italian Nicholas Benedetti. Cretans in the service of Venice took over from the Cypriot soldiers who guarded the city gate at Famagusta. On 25 January two galleys of the Venetian fleet brought Tristan de Giblest, loaded with fetters, back to Famagusta.



On 5 February the Archbishop's secretary, Gabriel Ferli, was arrested and, being put to the question on the rack, supplied a list of his employer's accomplices. On 1 April, Ferli was removed from the castle and imprisoned in the galleys. John Visconti, the captain of the Italian troops, was one of the many arrested and thrown into jail.

John Tafur, Count of Tripoli, the Franco-Cypriot who had played fast and loose with his loyalties during the rebellion, was stripped of his command as Captain of Famagusta and, after Ferrandetto's testimony under torture had implicated him as an accomplice in the murder of Andrew Cornaro, he was arrested and sent to Venice. There he was confined in the notorious Turriceila Prison, near the Bridge of Sighs. Later, his family were also deported to Venice as hostages.

The Venetians persecuted all rebels with great vigour. In the case of James Zaplana, one of the conspirators who had fled the island, the official investigation into his affairs led to the castle of Kolossi in the Limassol area. It was the residence of the Master of the Grand Commandery of the Knights of St. John. The Grand Master at that time was Nicholas Zaplana, brother of James. At first Nicholas denied any knowledge of a cache of valuables belonging to his brother, but, being put on oath, he revealed that it was, in fact, in the castle. The treasure was then confiscated, according to the law recently passed against the rebels. Nicholas Zaplana was dismissed from his post on 24 March 1474 and a letter, signed by Caterina, was sent to the Grand Master of the Order in Rhodes requesting him to make a new appointment. In the meantime Caterina herself took over the responsibility of Kolossi until a successor was named. The Grand Master, wishing to preserve the property and privileges of the Order on the island, named Mark Crispo, one of the Queen's uncles, as the new Master of the Grand Commandery in Cyprus. This was the initial step towards the acquisition by the Cornaro family of the Grand Commandery of Kolossi.

During this time the Abbot of Stavrovouni, Simon de St. André, having written an incriminating letter to his brother who was then in the entourage of the Pope, was imprisoned in Famagusta Castle and his monastery was sealed up. In his letter the Abbot had written: 'My dear brother, I have to inform you

that, with God's help, the Bastard (James II), the unlawful ruler who held the Kingdom by many unlawful acts, is dead. The Kingdom is going through many difficult days. The Queen has given birth to a child, a son, while King Ferdinand is secretly endeavouring to take over the Kingdom, which is at the same time claimed by Charlotte. The situation is very bad. Now Cyprus is in the hands of the Venetians. We were freed from the fangs of the dog, only to fall into the claws of the lion.' According to the chronicler George Bustron, the Abbot wrote many other 'strange things'; on 1 April, he was removed from Famagusta Castle and confined in a Venetian galley.

But it was not all pains and penalties. Those who had stood by Caterina were richly rewarded with offices and honours and also fiefs and revenues confiscated from the rebels. One of those to benefit greatly from the suppression of the rebellion was Caterina's cousin, George Contarini, who was knighted in Famagusta on 27 February. (However, as previously mentioned, his brother Paul was removed from his command in Kyrenia, at the insistence of Mocenigo, because he had proved weak at the moment of crisis.)

Peter Davila was made Constable of Cyprus and given two villages, other estates, and the houses in Famagusta that had belonged to Rizzo di Marino. He was also awarded the houses in Nicosia belonging to James Zaplana, in addition to the Armenian vineyard in Ayios Dhometios. As soon as the rebels had fled the Queen issued orders that the houses of James Zaplana, Louis Alberic and Rizzo di Marino, as well as the Archbishop's palace, should be sealed up. However, the houses of Zaplana and Alberic were broken open by the mob and the loot divided up. The valuable falcons owned by Zaplana and Alberic were carried off by a certain Benedict Cartagena. Finally, in a letter from the Council of Ten, Peter Davila and Morphou de Grenier, Count of Rouchas, the two staunchest supporters of Caterina during the emergency, were summoned to Venice, ostensibly for the sole purpose of receiving thanks and congratulations for their loyalty. In a letter from the Senate dated 23 October, after the death of the infant James III, Davila was addressed in most





friendly and courteous terms. When, on his arrival in Venice, he was presented to the assembled Senate, the Doge, Marcello, greeted him with great affection, saying 'Peter, the Signory has summoned you because they wish to meet you, reward and honour you and learn from you what is required in Cyprus now.' Nevertheless, behind the gracious words was an iron purpose. From the point of view of the Serene Republic it was possible for a man to be too loyal a supporter of Caterina. The long-term purpose of Venice was better served if the Queen were kept

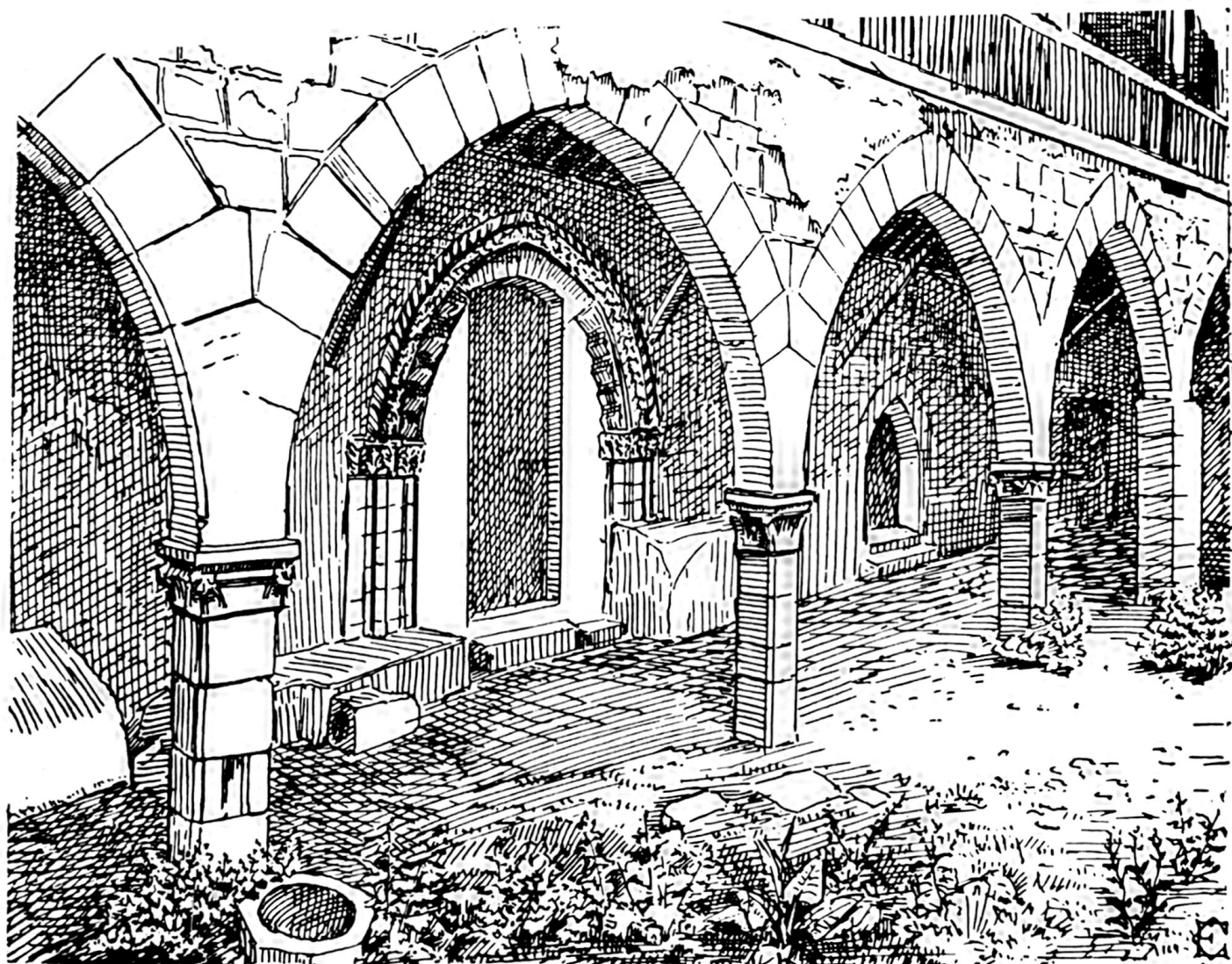
The gate tower of the last Lusignan palace in Nicosia; it was demolished in 1904

isolated and without Cypriot followers. Davila was treated with all honour and lodged in all comfort; he received a handsome allowance of between one hundred and fifty and two hundred ducats which was deducted from the income of the estates the Queen had bestowed on him in Cyprus; but he was not permitted to return home. In July 1475, Davila's wife and children were allowed to join him in his honourable exile; they narrowly escaped capture by Turkish ships during their voyage.

Increasingly Caterina found herself trapped in an impossible situation. She was now completely under the direction of the Provveditore and the two Counsellors. Her household and her movements were under Venetian control. Her income was limited to eight thousand ducats. She was not permitted to contemplate a second marriage. Her throne itself depended upon Venetian pleasure. She was constantly in fear of offending her severe 'mother', the Venetian Republic. Her liberty was gone. However, in every aspect of government, the 'Board of Three' maintained the fiction that all authority rested with the Queen and that all decisions were made by her. But, according to the late King's will, Caterina was only the Regent. She was standing in for the legal successor of her husband, the infant James III, until he should reach years of maturity. It must have been a pathetic scene when the young child was carried to Council meetings and other proceedings of state and his small hand was lifted up by his mother or a Counsellor to signify the Royal Assent.

The unfortunate child, the last Lusignan King of Cyprus, a direct descendant of many illustrious kings, was born fatherless, in a violent and treacherous age. Contemporaries suspected that, for different reasons, both the Venetians and the Catalans wanted him out of the way. The Venetians could then ignore James II's will, which named his illegitimate children as next in succession, and, instead, vest all power and authority in Caterina. Once the infant James III was out of the way it would be easy to deal with the illegitimate children. The Catalan revolt had demonstrated how dangerous these illegitimate offspring could be. The Catalans and the followers of Charlotte also wanted the





child disposed of because, in such an eventuality, the young Alonzo of Naples, Charlotte's adopted son, whom they had betrothed to Charla, James II's natural daughter, would immediately become the legitimate heir. The Venetians knew the Catalan pretensions very well and understood the danger. When the unfortunate James III duly expired, the Venetians and the Catalans predictably accused each other of poisoning him.

James III died on 26 August 1474, two days before his first birthday. It was given out officially that he died of fever and it is quite possible that he died of malaria, then and later endemic in Cyprus. Caterina who never suspected foul play in the case either of her husband or of her son, wrote later to the Signory to complain bitterly that the Counsellors had refused to allow her

The courtyard of the last  
Lusignan palace in Nicosia

and the child to reside in the more wholesome climate of Nicosia but had forced them to stay in Famagusta. She blamed the two Venetian officials for bringing about the baby's death by their refusal, thus depriving her, as she put it, of her one remaining comfort on earth. The infant King was buried in Famagusta in the same tomb in which his father had been laid. Years later, a traveller described seeing through a glass panel in the tomb the tiny corpse lying between the legs of his father, a pitiful glimpse of the last remains of the Lusignan dynasty in Cyprus.

The demise of the infant James III severed the last bond between the Cypriots and their Venetian Queen. In the beginning Caterina had been the wife of the dashing and courageous James II. She was the mother of James II's son and heir, the last, frail hope of the Lusignan dynasty. But after the child's death she came to be regarded, not as one whose personal destiny lay with the Cypriot people, but merely as the daughter of Venice, one of those ruthless, mercenary strangers from across the sea. The arrival of so many Venetians to replace the Cypriots in the machinery of government increased the resentment of the Cypriot nobles. As all Venetians acted in her name the Queen became the symbol of Venice. Caterina was caught between the Signory, her grasping, demanding guardian, whose aim was to absorb and annex her kingdom, and her disgruntled, rebellious subjects, who saw the last vestiges of their ancient privileges taken away from them by the Venetians. There were stirrings and mutterings among the people, and Venice began to fear a national uprising. Even those who had stood by Caterina during the Catalan revolt now began to wonder whether, after all, the Catalans had been right in their attempts to rescue the Kingdom from the grip of the Venetians. Many conspiracies were uncovered, directed against either the Queen's life or her liberty. Caterina found herself in a quandary. To appeal to Venice for more protection would be to surrender even more of her freedom of action and movement until none was left. To side with the Cypriots would be to bring down the wrath of the Republic upon her own head. Any Cypriot of some standing was now considered a potential rebel by the Venetians and, on the least pretext,



they were rounded up and imprisoned. Morphou de Grenier, Count of Rouchas, who had always been faithful to the Queen, was now gathering around him all the malcontents on the island; but resistance to Venice was a hopeless cause. Summoned to appear at Court, the Count of Rouchas at first refused, but finally presented himself, along with other prominent Cypriots; they were all arrested, shipped to Venice and incarcerated in the Turricella. In that grim jail they met a large number of other Cypriots, both rebels and suspected rebels. There were many there whose only crime was their devoted loyalty to the cause of Caterina and of Cyprus.

Next to be deported were the three illegitimate children of James II, Eugene, John and Charla, and also the late King's mother, Dame Marietta of Patras. Anthony Loredan, Captain-General of the Sea, was entrusted with the task of conveying them to Venice. In a letter to the Doge Loredan described Marietta as a clever and pertinacious woman. Eugene, who was seven or eight years old at the time, must have inherited some of the Lusignan charm, which both his father and his grandfather, John II, had possessed in abundance. Loredan waxes lyrical in describing the boy. Eugene, he reported to the Doge, was endowed with such charm and good nature that he was loved not only by the people of the island but by the very stones as well. The order for the deportation of Marietta and the children was issued by the Council of Ten on 30 October 1476. Two years later, on 27 August 1478, after an abortive attempt by the Neapolitans to kidnap Charla and marry her to Don Alonzo of Naples, Marietta and her three grandchildren were transferred to Padua. While the two boys were kept in the castle and sometimes allowed to go out under guard, Marietta and Charla were confined in a convent. The unfortunate Charla was kept under strict surveillance because, as she was already affianced to Alonzo, she posed the greatest threat to the Venetian schemes concerning Cyprus. On 24 July 1480, she died in captivity at Padua, her death most probably ordered by the Council of Ten. The inscription on her tomb in St. Augustine's Church gives her age as twelve years and three months. Marietta had a marble plaque placed over the tomb, showing a crown above the young girl's head. This symbolism the Venetians would not tolerate,



Shield-type silver  
gros of Caterina

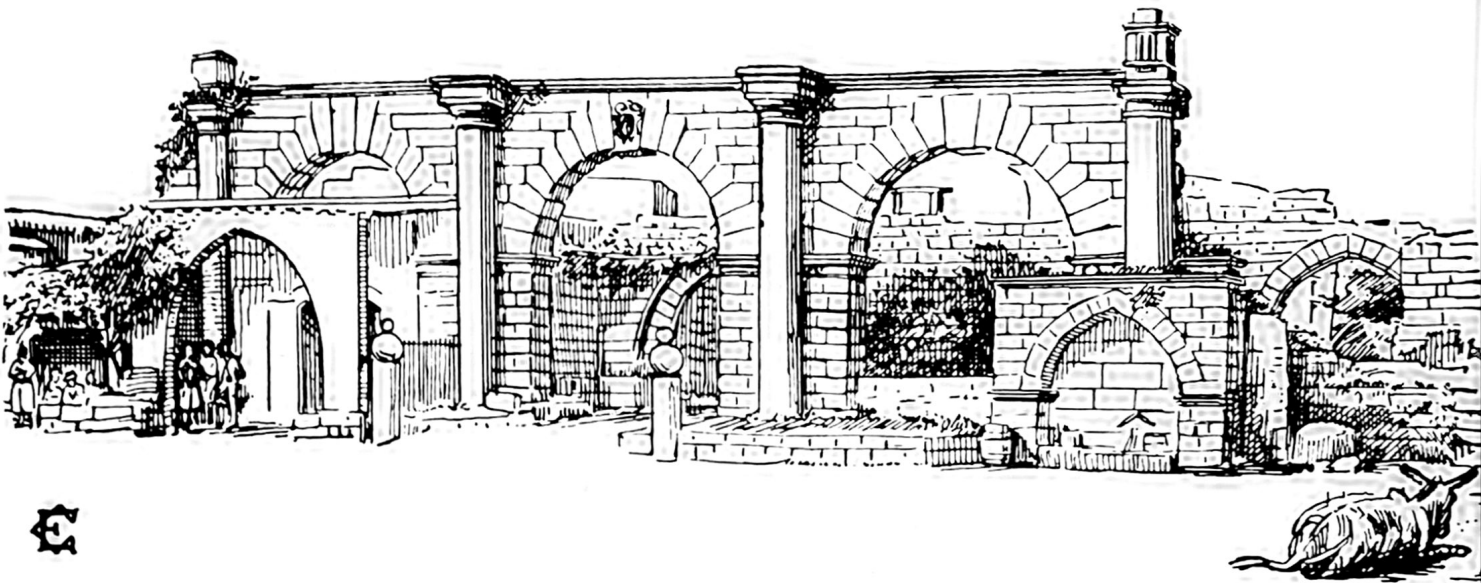


Silver gros of  
Caterina and James III

but they did allow a simple wreath of flowers to be substituted for the royal emblem. The Council of Ten attached the utmost importance to all its decisions regarding Cyprus. In a decree to its members issued on 21 October 1476, an interdict of absolute secrecy was imposed on any subject discussed relating to Cyprus and its members were not permitted to divulge the least information, either by words, hints, signs, or by any other method, openly or secretly, under penalty of severe punishment. The historian Mas Latrie, who published Loredan's report to the Doge, has these comments to make on the last descendants of the House of Lusignan: 'The information given by the Captain-General is of great interest. It shows that the Cypriots still had a real desire to live as an independent people, if it had been possible. They would have preferred the last bastard of their former kings to the domination of Venice. Eugene, like his brother John, after having hoped and sought for a restoration without success, finally returned to Venice where he died well treated by the Signory.'

On 19 October 1474 Caterina sent a special request to the Signory that her parents might be allowed to visit and comfort her in her bereavement. On 11 November the Senate drew up detailed instructions for Mark Cornaro's journey. It is interesting that until this time the Signory had refused to permit Caterina's father to come to Cyprus. But now, apparently, whatever had been the obstacles to a visit by him to Cyprus had disappeared; an elaborate programme was prepared for him and important duties were entrusted to him. He was assured that he could stay in Cyprus as long as he wished. It also seems that no efforts were spared to allay any suspicions that he might have harboured. The Senate drew up detailed instructions for his voyage. En route for Cyprus his diplomatic experience was to be made full use of; he was to be entrusted with a delicate mission to the Knights of St. John at Rhodes. From Venice one galley would take him to Modon, the very important Venetian naval base in the southern Peloponnese. As far as Modon there was no danger to be feared from Turkish ships, but beyond that point four galleys would escort him to the eastern Mediterranean;



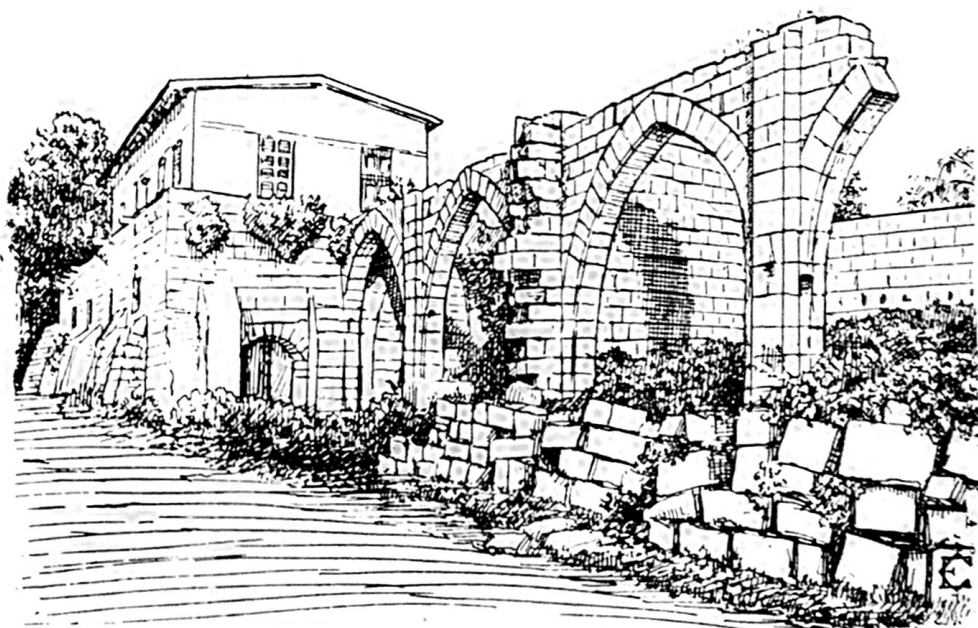


Sixteenth-century  
Venetian façade of the  
main palace in Famagusta

**E** these ships were to replace four other galleys on duty in Cyprus that were due to be relieved. At Rhodes he was to call at the port and present letters from the Signory to the Grand Master, Orsini, to the effect that, if the Order did not support the Venetians in Cyprus, at least they should not harbour the enemies of Venice (such as the rebel Catalans or the followers of Charlotte or the agents of King Ferdinand of Naples). He was also instructed to warn the Knights that Venice would act towards Rhodes in exactly the same way as Rhodes acted towards Venice. Surely the Order of St. John would prefer the two Powers to be friends rather than enemies? He was to perform this diplomatic mission without setting foot on shore at Rhodes in order to add weight and gravity to his message. If the Knights did not appear friendly he was not to appear conciliatory but menacing. He also received many instructions about his mission in Cyprus. As the father of the Queen, he was to take precedence over the Counsellors and the Provveditore, the official representatives of Venice. It was emphasised to him that the aim of all Venetians in Cyprus should be to preserve the freedom of the Kingdom under Caterina.

In the years that followed the Senate must have often questioned the wisdom of having allowed Mark Cornaro to join his daughter in Cyprus. The strained relations between Caterina and the Venetian representatives on the island at times became

Ruins of a smaller palace  
in Famagusta referred to  
as Palace of the Queen



stormy after her father's arrival. The old man seems to have been cranky and cantankerous, mean with money and very solicitous about the position and treatment of his daughter. He would have liked to turn the administration of the Kingdom into a family affair and often had violent disagreements with the 'Board of Three', which governed Cyprus through the formal figurehead of the Queen. He especially resented the insistence of the Counsellors on countersigning every command that came from the Queen. And he was impatient with legal formalities. On one occasion he sent his son Luke from Famagusta to Nicosia to collect a pledge of one hundred ducats without first having obtained the customary legal warrant. Mark was a difficult, touchy old man and very sensitive on all matters concerning his own status and that of the Queen his daughter. He was quite capable of making a scene in public in which he roundly abused the Counsellors, accusing them of wanting to make the Queen a slave, while they acted as lords and masters of the Kingdom. (The Counsellors indignantly described such incidents in letter after letter to the Doge.) Mark Cornaro was at the centre of every controversy. The Queen, he complained, was being subjected to all kinds of humiliations, especially by one of the Counsellors, who was 'not so much an adviser as a lord and governor.' The Counsellors compelled Caterina to take her meals in her own chamber 'on a small table only two foot long; and all the



household she has consists of three or four menservants and a comptroller;' Mark then bursts out, 'I swear to your Serenity that any one of my daughters is better treated in her own house than is the Queen.' Caterina had no control over finances and he himself, he said, had had to give her three thousand ducats out of his own pocket. Her letters were opened and the Provveditore (at this time Pasqualigo) was rude to her. The Counsellors refused to allow her to draw funds from the royal domain. If the Queen had authority, and if the Counsellors were content only to give advice, then the affairs of the island would speedily improve. At the end of one letter Mark himself, writing in an unsteady hand, implored the Doge to uphold the dignity of the Queen, which would reflect on the Republic. Finally, lest his motives be misunderstood, the old man assured the Doge of his patriotism.

Caterina herself wrote secret letters to the Doge to complain. The Counsellors, she said, were not treating her properly. Any commands from her had to be sent to them and countersigned. Petitions from her subjects had to be addressed to them and then forwarded to her, but, strangely, she had so far received none. As far as the administration of justice and finance was concerned, she had never been consulted. She was plaintive about domestic matters too. She had, she protested, only a small table and only two maids to wait on her at meals. Her royal state was not sufficiently magnificent. She was obliged to hear Mass privately and did not have a royal chapel, as was proper. She was not allowed to dine in public and be waited on by squires with the ceremony that befitted a royal lady. The Provveditore, Soranzo, attempted to make himself 'lord and governor of this our Kingdom'. Soranzo's successor, Pasqualigo, 'used such language to me as he would not have done if I had robbed him of home and fortune.' Her husband had never spoken to her in such an insulting manner. The Queen did not think it relevant to tell the Doge that these harsh words were addressed to her after the Counsellors had discovered that she had withdrawn ten thousand ducats from the royal domain without prior consultation. Instead, like a spoilt child, flirtatiously coaxing her august and unbending parent, Caterina wrote to the Doge pleading that he should write her back a 'little letter' to comfort her. She was in many ways a vain woman, who loved the trappings of her high



Silver gros of Caterina  
as Queen-Regnant

position. She had had the good luck to be made a queen and she was determined to live and to be treated like one. She might have reflected that the unfortunate Venetian officials she so much resented had to account for every ducat to the hard-headed Venetian book-keepers. Her wistful reference to her dead husband is yet another indication that Caterina remembered James II with affection and respect. Amidst her many personal problems Caterina also remembered, albeit in a postscript to her letter, to beg the Doge to put an end to the odious Venetian practice of press-ganging Cypriot serfs for the galleys. Apparently the earlier orders from the Signory forbidding press-ganging had been disregarded.

In their turn the Venetian officials on the island reported that Mark 'aimed to be all-powerful and to treat us as worthless' and accused him of trying to shake off dependence on Venice. Another official wrote: 'I am ready to burst with rage when I hear every hour, by every report I receive, how this new king behaves . . . For God's sake take steps, take steps I say; and I say no more because I wish I had power to have recourse to actions not words.'

It was no wonder that the Signory became quite out of patience with the whole pack of squabbling Venetians in Cyprus. In a new set of orders, the Counsellors were made the real governors of the Kingdom and Mark Cornaro was allowed to play only an advisory role; he was not permitted a vote. Caterina was assigned a civil list of eight thousand ducats a year. Out of the budget allotted to them the Counsellors were to provide first the Queen's annual allowance and, second, the soldiers' pay; third, they were required to pay the tribute to the Sultan. However, explicit instructions from the Doge stipulated that the tribute should be taken to Egypt by a Cypriot envoy, not a Venetian, so that Venice would not be seen to be involved in such a degrading transaction. The balance of the budget was to be given to the Captain-General of the Sea for the defence of the island. Despite these directives the Counsellors failed to pay the Queen's civil list regularly and the Senate had to remind them to do so. One of Caterina's complaints to Venice had been that the



Counsellors had moved into the royal apartments. Accordingly, on 22 August 1477, the Signory explained wearily to the Counsellors that although they had been instructed to reside close to the Queen this did not mean that they were required to live under the same roof with her. The Doge sent orders to the Counsellors to loosen their control over Caterina and allow her to move freely from one palace to another and to see that her table was properly supplied. After many letters of complaint and counter-complaint, in 1479 Venice instructed their officials 'to relax their vexatious policies' towards the Queen.

There is an obvious explanation for the strained relations that existed between Caterina and her father on the one hand and the representatives of the Venetian Republic on the other. While Caterina and Mark Cornaro aimed to establish a dynasty in Cyprus, Venice intended, at the right moment, to absorb and annex the island. The Venetians needed Caterina merely as a figurehead during the crucial period of transition and, tight-fisted as they were, they grew impatient when she assumed ostentatious airs and graces. Such displays of regal magnificence as she demanded required a great deal of hard cash, and the royal coffers were empty, while the Queen was not allowed to draw from the royal domain. Although a wealthy man her father was notoriously miserly and he insisted that all expenses incurred by the Queen should be met at public charge. Caterina was extravagant and spent large sums on sumptuous gowns and costly jewels. Even her mother, Donna Fiorenza, was shocked at her daughter's spendthrift ways when she visited her in Cyprus. It also appears that the Venetians did not want the Queen to become too much of a public figure. It better suited their long-term designs on the island for her to keep a low profile — she could then be the more easily removed and the more easily erased from the memory of her subjects. For this reason they preferred her to reside in the port city of Famagusta which was full of Venetian officials, naval captains from the fleet, military commanders and Venetian traders.

One way for Caterina to shake off the suffocating Venetian domination was to leave Famagusta and move to Nicosia. There were few Venetian residents there and the Greeks of the capital had often expressed, by word and deed, their devotion to her

person. Encouraged by her father, and against the advice of her Counsellors, she set off on the night of 26 April 1475 for Nicosia. Mark Cornaro had demanded an escort for the Queen's honour and safety; but the Counsellors would not supply even twenty foot-soldiers. So an escort of two hundred mounted men, made up of Greeks, Cypriot knights, other gentlemen and some mercenaries, accompanied Caterina and her father on the forty-mile journey across the plain of Mesaoria to Nicosia. The notables of the city came out three miles beyond the walls to welcome the Queen with loud shouts of 'long live Queen Caterina!' Waiting at the Famagusta Gate was a large and enthusiastic crowd of citizens and a large number of clerics, both Catholic and Orthodox, with their banners, crosses and icons. Caterina rode under a gilt canopy to St. Sophia, where she prayed before the High Altar. As she emerged from the beautiful Gothic cathedral, the assembled multitude broke into fervent acclamations in Greek and Italian. Then she rode to the palace, amidst the joyful demonstrations of the citizens of her capital.

The day after the Queen's arrival in Nicosia, on 28 April 1475, Mark Cornaro summoned the High Court, which had seldom met since the days of James II. The first item on the agenda was the question of finding politically suitable husbands for five widows. This feudal custom was a valuable form of patronage wielded by the sovereign. One of the widows to be married off at that time was a certain Apollonia of Pendayia, who had an income of two thousand five hundred ducats a year. One of the suitors for her hand was Luke Cornaro, Caterina's brother; but his suit was unsuccessful. It should be pointed out that the High Court was controlled, not by the Venetians, but by the Cypriot barons. Perhaps the native nobility felt that they had had enough of Cornaros in high places on the island and therefore chose another applicant.

Caterina, being both a vassal of the Egyptian Sultan and at the same time under the protection, or rather the supervision, of the Venetian Republic, must often felt impotent and of small consequence in the larger context of European politics. It was very important to her self-esteem that she should be spoken of as an independent sovereign. When a Treaty of Alliance was concluded between Venice, Florence, Ferrara and Milan against



the Turks, the Doge insisted that Caterina be mentioned as a partner, and she wrote, on 3 April 1475, to thank him profusely for this courtesy. Several years later, on 14 August 1487, the name of the Queen of Cyprus was recorded among the parties allied in the *Santissima Lega*, along with those of the Emperor Frederick III, King Charles VIII of France and the Doge of Venice. A year later her name was again included in another treaty Venice had entered into with Milan.

In May 1475 Caterina, on instructions from Venice, sent Thomas Ficard, a distinguished Cypriot who had been Chancellor under James II, to the Egyptian Sultan with the tribute, now two years overdue. The Venetians chose Ficard not only because, on principle, they were unwilling to participate in such a humiliating affair, but also because they wished to reassure Caterina's suzerain that the Kingdom of Cyprus, despite its Venetian Queen, was still intrinsically Cypriot. The tribute was dispatched now because news had reached the Venetians that Rizzo di Marino, that permanent thorn in the side of the Republic, was at the court in Cairo, intriguing against Caterina. The Cypriot envoy was also instructed to remind Sultan Kaitbai that this same Rizzo di Marino had been responsible for the massacre of the Mamelukes at Famagusta in the spring of 1464. Kaitbai handed over to Ficard a former Cypriot envoy whom he had cast into prison in 1474 when the unfortunate official had arrived at the Egyptian court empty-handed, and he also sent her valuable presents. A year later, in a letter to her, he acknowledged receipt of the tribute, thus in effect recognising her as his vassal. In his letter the Sultan congratulated her on the suppression of the Catalan revolt and accepted her explanation for the delay in paying because of the rebellion and the plague of locusts. He declared Caterina to be Queen and Lady of Cyprus and wished that her enemies might be confounded. He also sent her a robe of cloth of gold lined with ermine, which was to be worn by her as a symbol of her fealty to himself.

When Charlotte realised that the Venetians were firmly established in Cyprus, her hopes of invading the island from nearby Rhodes were dashed for ever and on 4 July 1474 she left the

hospitable island of the Knights, never to return. Charlotte had lived in Rhodes for twelve years and, although often a political embarrassment to her hosts, she was always treated with generosity and kindness by them. She was not ungrateful, often observing: 'If Caterina Cornaro calls herself a daughter of St. Mark, I have a greater right to call myself the daughter of St. John the Baptist.' Before Charlotte's departure the Order furnished her plentifully with money for the future as well as with travelling expenses. Her numerous followers, noble Cypriots with their wives and families, were allowed to continue to reside in Rhodes if, for some reason, they did not wish to return to their native island. On 4 July 1474 the Grand Master, Orsino, and the Knights of the Order of St. John escorted Queen Charlotte, surrounded by her loyal followers, down to the harbour. With tears in her eyes the Queen thanked the Grand Master for all the sacrifices the Order had made for her. Then she went on board ship, attended by a small entourage, which included her Cypriot Father Confessor Chafforicios and her Chamberlain Hugo de Langlois and his wife. The ship headed westwards; Charlotte was destined never to set foot on either Rhodes or Cyprus again. She went first to Savoy. Her husband, Prince Louis, had retired to the tranquillity of the abbey of Ripaille on the shores of Lake Geneva and had washed his hands of Cyprus and all its problems. Feeling estranged and unwanted the disappointed Charlotte proceeded to Rome. The Pope, Sixtus IV, who, as already mentioned, was a Piedmontese and had no love for the Venetians, received her kindly and promised her every assistance. To commemorate the event he commissioned a picture to be painted of the scene, which is still preserved in the sacristy of the church of the Holy Spirit in Rome. The picture depicts Charlotte, the crown of Cyprus on her head and accompanied by her retinue, kneeling as a suppliant before the Pope. An inscription records that Sixtus had received the unhappy Queen with such favour that she had been overwhelmed by gratitude; being unable to utter a word in her emotion, she had instead dissolved into tears. The Pope assigned to Charlotte a pension and a permanent residence in the Palazzo dei Convertendi at the Piazza Scozza Cavalli, between the Vatican and the Castel S. Angelo. He also provided for Charl-



otte's large entourage. Many of these people were from old Cypriot families who had sacrificed their houses and estates to follow her into exile, faithful to her cause even when her star was waning. Among them was the eminent Cypriot scholar, Louis Podocataro, who became secretary to Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, later Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503), and also taught Greek to his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia. Another of Charlotte's followers, George Flatro, became, through the marriage of his daughter Helena, the grandfather of Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605).

A very different kind of follower, one who had sworn eternal enmity to the Venetian Republic, was the seasoned adventurer and assassin from Sicily, Rizzo di Marino. After his escape from Cyprus on the collapse of the Catalan uprising, Rizzo made his way to Naples and began to prepare for revenge. In 1476 he sailed with the young Don Alonzo to Alexandria, accompanied by two large ships carrying a force of five hundred soldiers. Leaving the troops at the port, Rizzo and Alonzo went to Cairo in an attempt to win the Sultan's support. James III was dead and, according to the will of James II, the illegitimate children were next in line of succession. In 1473 Alonzo had been affianced to Charla. Rizzo played his cards cunningly. Sultan Kaitbai gave him a hospitable welcome, but made no promises because he found it convenient to hold the continual threat of Charlotte over Caterina in order to exact the Cyprus tribute regularly.

In 1478 the Signory received secret information from three separate sources that confirmed their suspicions that a conspiracy was afoot to assassinate Queen Caterina and re-instate Charlotte. Charlotte was to sail to Egypt with two Genoese ships and there, with Rizzo and Alonzo, await the outcome of the assassination plot. The first to betray the conspiracy was John Valderas, secretary to the Viceroy of Sicily, who, hearing of the plot in Cairo, went to Venice and informed the Council of Ten. Then the Venetians intercepted letters from Genoa to Charlotte, referring to a proposed voyage to Egypt. And, finally, in Cyprus itself, the plot was betrayed by one of the conspirators. Mark Venier, the Venetian Captain of Crete, had earlier hastened to Cyprus to volunteer his services after the Catalan revolt, but his loyalty had gone unrewarded. He had as a consequence sworn to

assassinate Caterina on Holy Thursday when she attended divine service in St. Sophia, and to proclaim Charlotte as lawful queen of the island. Venier sent word to Charlotte about these plans and advised her to go to Egypt, secure the support of Sultan Kaitbai and to remain in Cairo so that she might appear with Don Alonzo in Cyprus at the right moment. King Ferdinand was also informed of the plot by Venier and promised to dispatch twenty-two galleys to Cyprus to support the scheme. The Venetians also got to hear of the project from an agent of the King of Naples who had been employed as a go-between. But at Famagusta the plot was betrayed by Nicolò Bon, one of Venier's accomplices. Bon was also a Venetian from Crete, who had had a sordid quarrel with Venier over some prostitutes.

The Venetians used a judicious mixture of honeyed words, tempting bribes and veiled threats in their approach to Charlotte. They offered to pay her a handsome pension for life on condition that she renounced all claims to the crown of Cyprus and agreed always to reside on Venetian territory — presumably so that they might keep her under constant surveillance. The Venetian envoy sent to Rome to explain this to Charlotte was authorised to guarantee her a pension of between four and five thousand ducats a year. The Signory, the envoy was instructed to tell her, had always loved her and they sympathised with her in her unfortunate situation. Charlotte herself must know that Venice had deprived her of nothing; it was by the will of God that the Kingdom of Cyprus had fallen into James's hands; according to his last wishes, it was transferred to his wife and consort; Caterina was the adopted daughter of Venice and the Signory were in honour bound to support and defend her claim. The Senate, affecting a sincere spirit of friendship, advised Charlotte not to venture to go to any place where she might suffer harm. Her plans and the plans of her followers had been known to Venice all along and had been confirmed by the intercepted letters. Given the sea-power of Venice such a venture would be sheer madness, and the Senate warned Charlotte not to enter into activities which involved unavoidable dangers.

At the same time the Senate gave orders to the Captain-General of the Sea, Anthony Loredan, the hero of Scutari, who



had succeeded Mocenigo, to capture at all costs the four galleys on which Charlotte planned to sail to Egypt. Loredan was ordered to kill Charlotte during this action and to give out that her death had occurred in the heat of battle. Orders were also sent for twenty-seven Venetian galleys and twenty-four other armed ships of the Venetian merchant fleet to sail to Famagusta. On 16 December 1478, Loredan himself arrived in Cyprus with twenty-four more galleys, bringing the total Venetian armada to no less than seventy-five ships. Charlotte, however, who never lacked courage, was undeterred and, embarking at Ostia with four Genoese galleys, slipped through the net and landed safely at Alexandria. The Egyptian Sultan allowed her and Don Alonzo of Naples to proceed to Cairo.

There Charlotte received the news that the Venier murder-plot had been unmasked. Venier himself was arrested along with five of his accomplices and hanged from the battlements of the palace in Famagusta on Holy Thursday, 8 April 1479, the same day on which he had planned to assassinate Caterina. The rest of the conspirators were executed after Easter. After the collapse of this cold-blooded conspiracy Charlotte remained in Egypt for two and a half more years, in the vain hope that Sultan Kaitbai would invest her with the ceremonial robe reserved for the legitimate ruler of Cyprus. At the end of January 1482 she returned to Rome.

In August 1482 her husband, Louis of Savoy, died at the abbey of Rapaille on the shores of Lake Geneva. At the beginning of 1484 Charlotte's hopes were momentarily revived when the Italian cities, which were making common cause in a war against Venice, approved a plan put forward by King Ferdinand to send her to Cyprus with a Genoese squadron of ships. However, in the spring of 1484 the Venetian fleet successfully engaged the Neapolitan fleet and the subsequent peace treaty, signed at Bagnolo on 7 August, brought the war between Venice and the Italian states to an end, conclusively dashing Charlotte's aspirations. She then entered into negotiations to cede her claim to the Cyprus crown to the House of Savoy. On 25 February 1485, in a solemn ceremony in a side chapel of St. Peter's in the presence of her Cypriot Father Confessor, John Chafforicios, and her Cypriot Counsellor,

James Anglicos or Langlois ('the Englishman'), from the same family as her Chamberlain, who was her interpreter, Merle de Piozasque, Admiral of the Order of St. John, and several distinguished churchmen, Charlotte renounced her rights to Cyprus in favour of her nephew, Duke Charles I of Savoy, the son of her aunt Anna. (For this reason, the arms of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia still appear on the Great Shield of the former royal house of Italy.) With great emotion Charlotte handed over the royal ring to Dr. Philip Chevrier, the representative of Savoy, and confirmed her act of renunciation upon the Gospels. She retained only the title of queen, and thereafter lived quietly, indulging her taste for charity on a pension first granted her by Pope Sixtus and then on one given her by the House of Savoy. Her health deteriorated rapidly. In 1487, she asked to be taken to the Papal Chapel in St. Peter's where she repeated her bestowal of the Cyprus crown on the House of Savoy in the presence of numerous cardinals and the new Pope, Innocent VIII. The Venetians regarded all these ceremonies with amused irony. The Sultan of Egypt, the suzerain, had officially conferred the Kingdom of Cyprus on James II; he in his turn had bequeathed it to Caterina. Charlotte, therefore, was giving away what she did not possess.

Not long afterwards, about ten o'clock in the morning of 16 July 1487, Charlotte breathed her last, at the age of forty-four. That evening her body was conveyed to St. Peter's and interred in the Chapel of St. Andrew. Two weeks later, a Requiem Mass took place. Many cardinals participated, each, according to custom, bearing a flaming torch. Among their number was Rodrigo Borgia, the future Pope Alexander VI. On her tomb was written the simple inscription *Karlota Hierusalem, Cipri et Armeniae Regina*, followed by her age and the year of her death. Thus came to an end a tenacious twenty-year struggle to regain the crown of Cyprus. Charlotte, as the last true Lusignan, had comported herself with regal dignity and had accepted the blows of fate with patience and fortitude. Although the behaviour of the Cypriot ladies in her suite, like the Cypriot ladies who had accompanied her aunt, the Duchess Anna of Savoy, had often shocked the puritanical Italian society because of their licentious manners and ostentatious extravagance, Charlotte herself was



blameless in that respect, her entire being consumed with the burning obsession of regaining her royal rights. For a quarter of a century this daughter of a Lusignan king, John II, and a Byzantine princess, Helena Paleologina, had pursued her quest for recognition and vindication.

No sooner had the challenge to Venice posed by Charlotte ceased to exist than the threat from the Turks, always present in the background, appeared once more. The Turks had been gaining ground in the eastern Mediterranean since 1453 when they captured Constantinople. After this the Venetians were left alone to stem, if they could, the Turkish onslaught. Between 1463 and 1479 a war was waged intermittently between the Turks and the Venetians. In 1470 a huge Turkish fleet landed forces and took from the Venetians the large Greek island of Negroponte (Euboea). Two years later, a Venetian-Papal fleet burned Smyrna and Adalia in Asia Minor and tried to supply firearms to Uzun Hasan, the ruler of western Persia, a formidable enemy of the Turkish Sultan and a staunch ally of the Venetians. On 11 August 1472, at the battle of Otluk-beli, on the Upper Euphrates, Mehmet the Conqueror defeated Hasan and consolidated his rule over all Anatolia except the Cilician coast, which was still contested by the Mameluke Sultan of Egypt. In the peace treaty of 25 January 1478 the Venetians gave up Scutari, Negroponte and Lemnos and agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Sultan of ten thousand ducats in return for trade privileges in the Ottoman Empire. The following year the Turks occupied Otranto in southern Italy, threatening the Venetian sea routes to the Mediterranean. But Mehmet failed in his attempt to seize the island of Rhodes, which was besieged from May to August in 1480 and valiantly defended by the Knights of St. John. On 15 March 1486 Sultan Bayazid II, the successor to Mehmet the Conqueror, asked permission to use Cyprus as a naval base in an expedition against the Sultan of Egypt. Cyprus was a tributary of Egypt, and the Senate turned down the request, but the Turkish threat remained. On 6 June 1486 rumours circulated that the Turkish fleet was about to sail to Cyprus. The Venetian Captain-General ordered his whole fleet to Cyprus with orders not to

leave until the Turkish menace was over. In August these orders were reiterated. If the Turks approached Cyprus they were to be treated in a friendly way, but not more than eight or ten Turkish ships were to be allowed to enter Famagusta harbour. In the spring of 1488 Bayazid sent his entire fleet to Cyprus with orders to seize Famagusta. However, the prompt display of Venetian naval might in the form of twenty-five galleys sent the Turkish fleet hurriedly back to the Dardanelles. The Venetians increased the number of troops in their pay, mostly stradiots from the Balkans, and repaired the fortifications of Famagusta and the other fortresses. The Sultan of Egypt, expecting an attack on his territories by Bayazid, remitted the sixteen thousand ducats tribute due from Caterina, bidding her use the money for the defence of the island. Although the Egyptian army soundly defeated the Turks on 18 August 1488 in the Cilician plain between Tarsus and Adana, across the forty-mile channel from Cyprus on the Anatolian coast, Turkish power was in the ascendant, while Egyptian power began to wane. In 1488 Bayazid prepared a large force to use against the Mamelukes. In Venice there were fears that he would seize Cyprus and employ it as a base for his operations. Cyprus was put on a war-footing, but Venetian plans for the defence of the island were poorly organised, and the presence of Caterina complicated Venetian efforts to defend Cyprus.

It was not only the Turkish threat that afforded the Venetian Republic a pretext to annex Cyprus but also a preposterous intrigue, linking Queen Caterina with Don Alonzo of Naples in a proposed marriage alliance. The guiding force behind this was the notorious assassin and arch-enemy of Venice, Rizzo di Marino. He had had many adventures since his escape from Cyprus after the collapse of the Catalan revolt, reaching Egypt in the autumn of 1476, where he was favourably received by Sultan Kaitbai. He brought with him Alonzo of Naples. Rizzo was behind the plot to kidnap Charla in 1477, but when that plot miscarried and Charla died in captivity at Padua the following year, Alonzo stayed on in Egypt, later moving from Cairo to Alexandria, where he 'gave himself up to the pleasures of the



town.' Ten years later, in 1488, Rizzo devised a new scheme by which he proposed to marry off Alonzo to no less a person than Caterina, who was twelve years his senior, being then thirty-four and Alonzo twenty-two. Caterina was, by the standards of her time, a middle-aged woman, but she apparently gave her consent to the proposed alliance. Resentful at the way she was treated by the Venetians, and fearing that she would soon be forced to abdicate, she seems to have approved an alliance with Naples, the rival and enemy of her native Venice. Rizzo approached the Queen through Vera, one of her ladies-in-waiting and the sister of Tristan de Giblet, a trusted collaborator of his. As early as 1479 an informer had made a secret deposition to the Council of Ten, alleging that the Queen was a traitor. What the details of the accusation were then is not known, but thereafter Caterina was kept under strict surveillance, while the Venetians started rounding up all persons in Cyprus whom they considered to be too loyal to the Queen. There is a sad story concerning a Dominican friar related by Felix Fabri in 1480; Fabri met the unfortunate man on a ship bound for Venice, loaded with chains, lamenting his fate, and protesting bitterly that he was innocent of all offence. He had been overheard by government agents speaking about a future king of Cyprus and this line of thought was enough to bring about his destruction.

Rizzo di Marino hired a French barque from Damietta in Egypt without telling the owner the destination of his voyage, but the Venetian Vice-Consul there and the Venetian Consul in Cairo, Anthony Giustinian, who had agents watching Rizzo's movements, were soon informed and immediately sent word to the Captain-General of the Sea, Francis Priuli, with a detailed description of the vessel. Priuli, who had succeeded Anthony Loredan, was patrolling in Cilician waters, north of Cyprus, keeping an eye on the Turkish fleet, but he at once sailed to the south of the island, opposite Cape Mazoto, facing towards Egypt. It was not long before one of his captains, Anthony de Stephanie, spotted a ship of unknown origin sailing at speed towards Cape Akamas, the most westerly point of the island. The Venetian captain set off in pursuit and caught up with the mysterious ship at the cape. Its crew were put under arrest and the captain and purser were brought aboard the Venetian galley.

Threatened with summary execution, the two men admitted that they had given passage to Rizzo di Marino, his secretary, Tristan de Giblest and two of their servants, who had all disembarked at Fontana Amorosa, the famous crystalline spring in the Akamas foothills, mentioned in the love sonnets of Petrarch. According to the French captain of the barque, Rizzo and Tristan were expected to return to the ship in four days time. The captain also betrayed the signal arranged between himself and Rizzo, which would signify that the latter was ready to return to the ship. Captain-General Priuli, who had now arrived with his ships at Akamas, replaced the crew of the French barque with Venetians, and then withdrew out of sight to wait for his catch.

On the fourth night Rizzo signalled his return to the coast by lighting a fire on the beach and this was duly acknowledged from the French barque. A boat was then dispatched to the shore to pick him and his party up, according to plan. As Rizzo stepped on to the deck of the barque, he observed to Tristan de Giblest, 'Thank God we are safe at last!' He then asked if all was well on board the ship, because a black raven had flown overhead all day long as he journeyed back over the mountains to the coast and this was a bad omen. At that moment a number of heavily-armed Venetians, who had been concealed beneath a tarpaulin, leaped out, shouting, 'Stop, Rizzo, you are a prisoner of the Captain-General!' Rizzo and Tristan were handcuffed and at once led before Priuli. Some incriminating documents were found on the prisoners. They were then transferred to a Venetian galley and the ship set sail for Venice.

Tristan de Giblest was another dangerous adventurer, trained in the same tough school as Rizzo di Marino. After the collapse of the Catalan revolt, he had escaped from Cyprus with Rizzo and the other rebels, but was apprehended and brought back in chains to Famagusta. What befell him during the next ten years or so is unclear. But in 1485, Tristan quarrelled violently with a man named Kouettos outside St. Sophia in Nicosia and, in the heat of the argument, Kouettos struck him with the flat of his sword. However, some knights came between the two incensed men and managed to effect a reconciliation. Both of them took an oath on the Body of Christ that they would faithfully keep eternal peace between them. Not long afterwards Tristan was



walking along a street in Venice and, as he was about to pass a barber's shop, he caught sight of his old enemy, reflected in a mirror, lying back in a chair, his neck outstretched, waiting to be shaved. The sight of the exposed throat combined with the spectacle of an array of cut-throat razors lying on the nearby counter presented too much of a temptation for de Gibleto to resist. With one bound he entered the shop, seized a razor with one hand and his enemy by the hair with the other and expertly slit his throat from ear to ear. From that time Gibleto was a fugitive, an outlaw in Venetian territory, with a price of one thousand ducats on his head. Before leaving Cyprus for Venice he had wisely taken the precaution of transferring his property to his wife. After the murder of Kouettos, he had escaped to Naples, where he started negotiating the marriage between Caterina and Alonzo. He then donned the habit of a Franciscan monk and sailed to Egypt on a Neapolitan ship, to meet Rizzo di Marino. Tristan's sister Vera, a trusted confidante of Caterina provided the liaison between the conspirators and the Queen. His involvement in the Neapolitan marriage plot against Venice was, he knew, a far more heinous offence in the eyes of the Venetians than the murder of Kouettos, and the prospect of being thrown into a Venetian dungeon, or being tortured on the rack and later executed was too frightful for Tristan de Gibleto to face. At first he waited, hoping that an opportunity for escape would present itself, but after the galley left Greek waters at Corfu and entered the Adriatic, Tristan despaired and swallowed the poison concealed in his diamond ring; he died a few days later, shortly before the ship reached Venice. Vera, more fortunate than her brother, managed to escape to Rhodes after Rizzo and Tristan were arrested and the conspiracy exposed.

Rizzo's death, like his life, was violent and macabre. According to the chronicler Marino Sanudo, Rizzo carried a stone phial of poison sewn into his clothes. Why he did not use it on himself is a mystery. It is possible that his captors discovered it when they searched him for documents or, more probably, he hoped that the Venetians would not dare to kill him for fear of the reaction of the Sultan of Egypt, whose envoy he claimed to be. Rizzo was brought to Venice on 14 October 1488. Three days later he was taken before the Council of Ten. So great was the

fear of him in Venice that, although he appeared in chains and under heavy guard, the members of the Council came to the meeting with their weapons. On 8 November a special tribunal of four members of the Council of Ten was set up for the purpose of questioning and, if necessary, torturing Rizzo and his servants in order to obtain further information about Caterina's plans. This was the Tribunal of State Inquisitors, which after this occasion became permanent and notorious. Under severe torture, Rizzo di Marino confessed that he had had a clandestine meeting with Caterina in Paphos concerning a projected marriage with Alonzo. The documents, money and jewels found on him and his companions provided additional evidence. But he insisted that he had acted as an envoy of Sultan Kaitbai and he warned his interrogators of the consequences to them and to Venetian interests in the Levant when his Mameluke masters should hear of the treatment he was receiving at their hands. For six months the Council deliberated, undecided what to do with him. It could be argued that, since Cyprus was tributary to the Sultan, the latter had every right to send an envoy with a message for his vassal, Caterina. Still more important was the fact that trade with the Levant was a major factor in the economic life and foreign policy of Venice; it would have been catastrophic for Venetian interests if the Sultan of Egypt, who controlled the shores of the Near East from Alexandretta in Asia Minor to Alexandria in Egypt and beyond, expelled Venetian traders and closed Levantine ports to Venetian ships. The order for the execution of Rizzo di Marino was finally issued on 13 May 1489. The document, in Latin, which still survives in the archives of the Council of Ten, states that 'Ritius ... stranguletur sive suffocetur ... sic quod moriatur et anima a corpore separatur.' However, the execution was not carried out within three days, as explicitly stated in the order. Instead, the Council spread the rumour that Rizzo had committed suicide in prison and waited to observe the effect in Cairo. If the Sultan were to be seriously offended the Council could always produce Rizzo alive. Two more years passed and still they had heard nothing from the Sultan; he, in fact, had little interest in Rizzo's fate and had only encouraged him because, at one point, their aims had coincided; the Sultan also did not want Cyprus to go to Venice. In 1491 the

*Opposite*  
Genealogical tree of the  
Cornaro family by un-  
known eighteenth-  
century artist  
(Palazzo Corner, Venice)

*Overleaf*  
'The Basin of St. Mark  
on Ascension Day' by  
Canaletto. Similar pomp  
was to greet Caterina on  
three occasions. In 1468  
when at the age of four-  
teen she was taken to the  
Doge's Palace for the  
marriage by proxy in  
1472 when she left for  
her island kingdom and  
in 1489 when she re-  
turned to her native Ven-  
ice after the abdication  
(National Gallery,  
London)





DE  
GENTE CORNELIA













CARD

HIERO ARMOR  
1550

JACOB. REX

CATHERINA  
REGINA

1472

JACOB. IV SIGNANVS  
GREX CIPRI





Venetians felt it safe to dispose of their prisoner, who had for the past three years been languishing in the smallest and strongest cell in the Turriceffa. In complete secrecy the death warrant issued in 1489 was now carried out. At the dead of night, Rizzo di Marino was led from the Turriceffa to the Armoury. He was dressed in a long garment and his feet were bare. A hood had been placed over his head so that he could not see and his hands were bound behind his back. At the Armoury he was told to stand on a wooden bench and the hangman put the noose around his neck. Then the bench was kicked from under his feet and Rizzo swung from a beam, choking to death. The execution took place in the presence of only one witness, so that if the business of the night should leak out, the Council, while dissociating itself, would know on whom to place the exclusive blame. Malipiero, who also described Rizzo's last hours, says that Rizzo challenged the Venetians to execute him in public. The body was put into a sack, taken to the island of Murano in the lagoon and buried at the Monastery of S. Cristoforo in an unmarked grave. The monks were told to ask no questions. So successfully were these facts concealed that the Cypriot chroniclers George and Florio Bustron both state that no one ever knew what became of Rizzo di Marino.

As the Turkish threat grew increasingly more dangerous and the need to fortify Cyprus more urgent, Caterina and the whole charade of royal authority became irrelevant and obstructive in the eyes of Venice. The Neapolitan intrigue concerning Caterina and Alonzo, involving such disreputable foes of the Republic as Rizzo di Marino and Tristan de Giblet, was the last straw. Suddenly the wordly-wise men in Venice felt they had put up with enough. Charlotte was out of the way and the Venetians no longer had to pretend that their interests in Cyprus was solely on behalf of their adopted daughter. Caterina had served her purpose and could be of no further use to Venice. Now she was in the way, superfluous, a costly liability. A military situation was developing in Cyprus in which there was neither time nor place for female intrigues and tantrums. Until now Venice had held her hand for fear of complications with the Egyptian

*Opposite*

Detail from the Cornaro genealogical tree showing Caterina with her husband James II and her infant son James III (Palazzo Corner, Venice)



suzerain. But the Mameluke Sultan was getting weaker every day because of the rising power of the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople which threatened not only Cyprus and the coast-line of the Levant but Egypt itself. The Mamelukes were no longer in a position to mount an expedition against Cyprus. The fact that Sultan Kaitbai had recently foregone the Cyprus tribute, requiring only that the money be used for defence against the Turks, was a clear signal to Venice which did not go unnoticed. Once they had made the decision to annex Cyprus the Venetians were anxious to finish the job as quickly as possible, lest some mishap should occur but, wise in the ways of international politics, they sought a graceful way out, with no loss of face for anyone. After all Caterina was still a daughter of Venice and any slight offered to her would reflect on the Serene Republic. Once more, Venice handled a difficult situation with the utmost tact and consummate diplomatic skill.

In 1486 Venice sent to Cyprus Caterina's mother, Donna Fiorenza, with the express purpose of softening up her daughter's determination to hold on to Cyprus. Donna Fiorenza assured Caterina soothingly that she could go home to Venice temporarily to avoid the Turkish danger and return to Cyprus later, perhaps after a year. She told Caterina that, when she left, she would send out George, Caterina's brother, to accompany her to Venice. The Senate is said to have been influenced by the report, attributed to Donna Fiorenza, that Caterina was living extravagantly. This report could not have come at a worse time, as money was then very short in Venice because of the Turkish war. In Cyprus money was so short that many of the troops employed there were going unpaid and living a squalid existence; many soldiers deserted to the Turks in consequence.

The day after Rizzo was brought as a prisoner to Venice, the Council of Ten met to discuss Caterina's future. Her two uncles, John Contarini and Nicholas Mocenigo, were not allowed to take part in the deliberations to avoid conflict of interest. On 22 October, 1488, the decision was taken to force Caterina to abdicate. The Neapolitan marriage project was, according to the Council, 'new as well as surprising.' Priuli, the Captain-General of the Sea, was sent orders to sail to Cyprus with as many galleys as he thought necessary and to escort the Queen back to Venice.

He was also instructed to bring along Thomas Ficard, the former chancellor of James II and now Caterina's confidant and most trusted envoy. In Cyprus, the Captain-General was told, a government should be set up on the Cretan model. Priuli, who had said in his report that there were many important matters of such a sensitive nature that he was unwilling to disclose them except verbally, was ordered by the Council to make a written report, dispatch it immediately and remain where he was, awaiting orders. Next day the Council met again and rescinded some of the projected measures until the new report should arrive from the Captain-General. They were anxious that the removal of Caterina should be done with appropriate deference and without damage to the Venetian image in Cyprus. But five days later, on 28 October, when letters reached Venice from Nicholas Capello, Provveditore of the Fleet at Famagusta, and from the Provveditore and the Counsellors of the island, the full gravity and urgency of the situation became apparent and the Council of Ten arrived at a final decision: Caterina should be recalled immediately. On the same day, 28 October, the Council of Ten wrote to Priuli, telling him the time had come for the discreet removal of Caterina, who could easily lose Cyprus through her intrigues and desire to remarry. Priuli was to sail at once 'to our island of Cyprus' with the greater part of his fleet. In order to camouflage his movements he should spread the rumour that he had information that the Turkish Fleet intended soon to come out of the Dardanelles and return to the Cilician coast, opposite Cyprus. The Captain-General was instructed to go about the business of the abdication as gently as possible, without compromising either the honour of the Queen or the dignity of the Signory. He should leave the Provveditore of the Fleet, Cosmas Pasqualigo, with four galleys to guard the Adriatic and hasten with the rest of the fleet to Cyprus. There he should explain to the Queen that the Signory had her good at heart and that the Turks were determined to capture the island and could only be deterred if they knew the defence of Cyprus was in the hands of Venice. Priuli was instructed to carry out his orders as gently as possible, but under no circumstances was he to fail in his mission. He was to use his most engaging language — 'the sweetest, kindest, most conciliatory and courteous language.' He





Doge Agostino Barbarigo  
(1484-1501) who annexed  
Cyprus in 1489 and Doge  
Leonardo Loredan  
(1501-1521)  
(Sala del Maggior  
Consiglio, Doge's Palace,  
Venice)

was to promise Caterina that she would always be treated as a queen and the beloved daughter of the Signory and that her yearly income of eight thousand ducats would continue to be paid without interruption. If Caterina refused, he was to tell her that she had forfeited all claim to the protection of the Republic; her income would be suspended and she would be treated as a rebel. Priuli was authorised 'to take such measures that the Queen would, even against her will, satisfy the pronounced decision of the Signory.' It was up to the Captain-General to decide what measures were necessary. When he had obtained her consent, he was directed to perform a curiously modern exercise in public relations; he was to present a cheerful and good-humoured appearance in public and speak to all Cypriots, especially the notables, in a friendly, pleasant way, in order to reassure them of the benevolence of the Signory's intentions. In the meantime, the Captain-General was to give out that Caterina had abdicated of her own free will, under no compulsion or pressure from the Republic; he was merely carrying out the personal wishes of the Queen. He should, with her consent, publish a proclamation, giving the reasons for her retirement.

And he should make sure that the standard of St. Mark was flown above all fortresses on the island, replacing that of the Lusignans.

The Council of Ten also decided to send George Cornaro, Caterina's brother, to Cyprus as soon as possible, entrusted with the task of persuading his sister to abdicate voluntarily. George received his instructions directly from the Doge and he travelled at state expense, for which an initial sum of one hundred and fifty ducats was paid to him. (At the conclusion of his mission George asked for another two hundred and sixty-two ducats for his expenses and was duly reimbursed.) On 3 November, Captain-General Priuli was informed of the mission assigned to George Cornaro. At the same time he was warned on no account to reveal to George anything concerning Caterina's plans to marry again. Presumably, if she willingly consented to abdicate, Venice would allow her to make a graceful exit and no mention would ever be made of her 'treacherous' plot. The evidence concerning that plot would be a trump card in Priuli's hands, to be used only if she turned out to be unwilling to co-operate. If George did not succeed in persuading his sister, the Captain-General was to proceed according to the instructions given to him on 28 October. The Council of Ten also directed Priuli to send a reliable person to Cairo in Caterina's name, to inform the Sultan that she had lately felt herself so much threatened that she had implored the Signory to allow her to withdraw to Venice. A letter to this effect was to be written to the Sultan by the Queen herself, signed with her own hand. The Sultan should be assured that Venice would continue to pay the customary tribute. On the same day as the Council issued its orders to Priuli, 28 October, a letter was also sent by the Council to Caterina herself, in which reference was made to the decision taken concerning the disclosure made by the Captain-General (without mentioning the exact nature of the disclosure) and expressing the hope that she would follow Priuli's fatherly advice and thus prove herself to be an obedient daughter of the Republic. In the letter, the Council assured Caterina of the paternal affection and solicitude of the Signory; her royal honour would be respected and her annual allowance of eight thousand ducats would continue to be paid.

On 7 November 1488 George Cornaro embarked on a fast



*grippe* in order to catch up with Priuli and then sail on to Cyprus. The following day the Council of Ten received a letter from Nicholas Capello, the Provveditore of the Fleet at Famagusta, dated 29 September, with the news that Vera, sister of Tristan de Giblet and one of the Queen's ladies, had left for Rhodes; there was some suspicion that Caterina herself might flee there also. It was now a race against time. Another fast *grippe* was dispatched from Venice immediately, carrying fresh instructions for Priuli and George Cornaro; they should proceed to Cyprus as quickly as possible, putting in at Rhodes *en route*. If Caterina was there George should try to persuade her to give up any plans she might have formed and obey the will of the Signory. Even then her brother was not to be told of the marriage project. The instructions laid down that at Rhodes the Captain-General should first find out in a subtle way if Caterina had arrived there already. In that case George Cornaro should be sent to speak to his sister. If she was unwilling to leave Rhodes, then Priuli was to seek assistance of the Grand Master, Peter d'Aubusson, requesting him to reason with her and, if this failed, to hand her over to the Venetian representatives. If the Grand Master refused to co-operate, as he had refused to deliver Rizzo di Marino to Mocenigo a few years earlier, he was to be warned of the dangerous situation he would become embroiled in. If this also failed, Priuli should hasten to Cyprus waters and remain there, ready for any eventuality. He should, of course, inform the Council immediately of the exact state of affairs. (It was then that the Council of Ten, as mentioned earlier, decided to set up the notorious Tribunal of State Inquisitors, in this instance to interrogate under torture Rizzo di Marino to extract from him further information about Caterina's intentions.)

George Cornaro duly caught up with Priuli at Corfu, transferred to a galley in the Captain-General's fleet and sailed on with him towards Cyprus. They did not find Caterina at Rhodes, perhaps because, even if she had hoped to flee there, she was unable to escape from the watchful eyes of her Counsellors. The fleet then sailed towards the southern coast of Cyprus in order to bar the way to Egypt and prevent an attempted flight in that direction. But when the ships anchored at Limassol the Venetians learned that the Queen was still in Nicosia. George



Cornaro arrived in the capital on 24 January 1489 and at once set about his task. He found his sister extremely reluctant to relinquish her throne. Caterina is reported to have asked plaintively: 'Are not my lords of Venice content to have their island when I am dead, that they would deprive me thus soon of what my husband left me?' George spoke to her of the danger she was in because of the vulnerable position of Cyprus, which could at any time be attacked by the Turks before Venetian help could reach the island. If, however, she made a gift of her kingdom to her motherland she would gain great glory, a magnificent

'Caterina Cornaro reminded by her brother George that she is no longer Queen of Cyprus' Painting by Francesco Hayez, owned by the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (Donizetti Theatre, Bergamo) .



reception would be accorded her at Venice and a fief in her homeland granted, where she could live a peaceful and tranquil life, free from all cares; this she owed to Venice because Venice had so often saved her in times of danger. All such arguments produced only 'tears, entreaties, thoughts of flight,' presumably to Rhodes. In vain did Caterina plead once more: 'Is it not enough that Venice should inherit when I am gone?' Then George, when promises and fair words did not avail, used threats and painted a bleak picture of the consequences of her disobedience. According to Centelli, George told Caterina: 'If you refuse to come the Signory has its general here with the fleet, as you know; you will be removed by force, you will lose the favour of the Signory and our family will be ruined.' This was indeed a clinching argument if viewed in the context of Venetian society. The members of the Signory were drawn from a few important families and the Cornaros were one of the most distinguished of these. Loyalty to country and loyalty to family were rigorously linked and the aggrandisement of Venice brought direct and immediate benefits to the ruling élite. Disobedience to the wishes of the Signory was unthinkable and to Caterina, brought up in the best tradition, the admonitions of her brother were all too real.

Once Caterina had given her consent to the abdication, preparations began for her departure. On 1 February, she went on pilgrimage to a shrine near Kyrenia, accompanied by the Provveditore and a large entourage of Cypriot and Venetian nobles. Two weeks later, on 15 February, it was time to leave Nicosia for Famagusta. This was painful for Caterina, as the citizens of the capital had always been loyal to her and she was fond of them. After a solemn *Te Deum* in St. Sophia a ceremony took place in the piazza during which the standard of the House of Lusignan was lowered and that of St. Mark raised in its place. As Caterina left her palace in Nicosia for the last time the soldiers following their orders, shouted: 'Long live St. Mark!' Dressed in black silk, and escorted by all the barons and their ladies and three hundred stradiots, the Queen set off on horseback for Famagusta. There was great distress among the

people as they saw Caterina depart and she tried to comfort them: 'Be of good cheer, I shall return.' Six knights held her horse's reins, three on each side. According to George Bustron, 'from the moment she left Nicosia and all the journey, tears did not cease to flow from her eyes. At her departure all the populace were wailing and lamenting with her.' When she arrived in Famagusta Caterina was met at the Land Gate by all the clergy, the nobles, the Venetian officials and the officers of the Fleet, and was conducted to the palace under the shade of a large golden canopy. All the church bells rang out and the common people thronged the streets, eager to catch a final glimpse of their Queen, and waved their farewells. Even the Venetians caught the spirit of the occasion and, now that they had had their way, joined in this last ceremonial homage. But still, the psychological point had to be made once again that Caterina was abdicating of her own free will. At the palace Priuli handed over to her the Signory's letter and briefly urged her to respond to it. Caterina turned to her cousin, George Contarini, whom she had made Count of Jaffa and First Baron of the Kingdom in 1474, and called upon him to reply to the Captain-General. On her behalf Contarini formally replied to Priuli, saying that she would submit to the Signory's wishes. As the weather was still wintry and the sea was rough Priuli did not require Caterina to embark yet, but decided to complete the take-over of the Kingdom in the name of St. Mark while she was still on the island. On 26 February 1489, a High Mass was held in the cathedral of Famagusta, attended by Priuli and his officers as well as the knights and barons. The banner of St. Mark, adorned with the device of the Venetian Republic, was blessed and handed to Caterina; she then presented it to the Captain-General Priuli, who formally accepted it from her hands. The illustrious Signory, Priuli declared, thereby took possession of Cyprus and would from then on defend it against all enemies. Later, at Famagusta Castle, the Lusignan flag was lowered and the standard of St. Mark hoisted aloft amidst the acclamations of the Venetian officials and the Venetian Fleet. Cyprus was now part of the Venetian Empire. On 14 March 1489, Caterina, accompanied by her brother George and a large retinue, embarked on a galley commanded by her relative Nicholas Cornaro. Multitudes



of people had assembled at the ancient port of Famagusta, many of them weeping and lamenting, and many waded into the sea to maintain contact with their ex-Queen until the last and to bid her farewell.

Thus the reign of the Venetian Queen of Cyprus came to an end. She had reigned for sixteen years; three years in Famagusta and thirteen in Nicosia. Caterina had played out her part in Venice's quest for Empire and the island of Aphrodite passed into the hands of the Venetian Republic. The Lusignan nobility had no choice but to submit, only petitioning that the Assizes, the law of the land, should remain in force. The Venetians assured them that their ancient customs would be upheld and the administration of the island would continue as before; they actually commissioned an Italian translation of the Assizes. However when the Cypriot barons were offered admission to the Libro d'Oro of Venice their pride did not allow them to accept. Old families began to die out; the rule of Venice became more and more bureaucratic. The Venetians acquired Cyprus by questionable means and its acquisition did them little good. Unable to turn the island into a successful commercial enterprise, Venice made it into a military and naval base and tried ineffectually to improve its defences on the most up-to-date lines to guard against the approaching Turkish menace. In the history of Cyprus its acquisition by Venice marked merely the twilight that succeeded the prosperous period of Frankish rule before final darkness descended with the Turkish conquest in 1571.

# CATERINA 'DOMINA' OF ASOLO: LADY OF THE RENAISSANCE

Terence Mullaly

When Caterina again set foot in her native Venice she stepped out of history and into immortality. It is ironical. As Queen of Cyprus she played a role in history, but it was a relatively minor one; her position mattered, yet she left no clear imprint. Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, has a place in history of concern to those immersed in Cyprus and the details of affairs in the eastern Mediterranean. With Caterina Cornaro, ex-Queen of Cyprus and Lady of Asolo, it is different. The events hardly need recording. A more potent force than history has intervened. Caterina has become a legend.

The return to Venice was a foretaste of one facet of the years to come. In the public eye every honour was Caterina's. Venice was consummate when it came to ceremonial and her homecoming was pure spectacle. Accounts vary as to the precise order in which events occurred, but many details are clear. The voyage from Cyprus had taken almost three months. Nothing can have been more delightful than the first sight of the Lido, which her galley reached on 5 June 1489. At once, before she disembarked, homage was paid to her by the leading patricians and their wives.

Caterina was then taken to the monastery of S. Nicolò di Lido. There the Benedictines had prepared the best rooms for her and her ladies. She could at last sleep on land. The rest must have



been needed; the next day was to be as exhausting as it was traumatic.

At an early hour the Doge, Agostino Barbarigo, and the *Dieci* went to S. Nicolò. Already there were many boats about and it was, so far, a glorious day. Caterina was ceremonially escorted aboard the Bucentaur, the great gilded Venetian state barge. There she was seated, beside the Doge, on the poop on a gilded throne. What is more, according to one account, it was, as a special honour, raised higher than his. Whether or not that was so everybody is agreed that the Bucentaur was crowded with women.

Yet the day was not without its alarms, for at one point a storm swept across the Bacino. The suddenness of such squalls is a feature of Venice, yet this one seems to have been particularly severe and Sanudo, the faithful diarist, tells us that the ladies were greatly frightened. At once the anchor was lowered.

However the storm passed as quickly as it had come, and the voyage was continued. We are told that after the disturbance the atmosphere became fresh. The mood was festive. Venice was at this moment politically hard pressed. The Doge and his advisers desperately needed something to distract the people: an event stressing the majesty of the state was particularly welcome. What is more, and in subsequent years the pattern is repeated at Asolo and Brescia, Caterina seems to have had a special appeal for crowds. On this occasion they were gathered at every available vantage point; they were not only on the quays from which the Bucentaur could be seen, they were also congregated on the *altane*, those flat platforms erected on the roofs of Venetian houses, and at every window. There were, too, carpets and banners hanging from many windows, while all over the city the bells were ringing.

If anything the scene on the water was even gayer. Every kind of boat was out to accompany the Bucentaur back from the Lido. What it must have looked like is conveyed by Aliense in a painting in the Museo Correr. Aliense was not there, indeed he was not born until 1556, but he saw comparable events. In his painting he does though mingle history with an intimation of the excitement of the day.

This occasion was symbolic. Caterina was being celebrated for

*Opposite*  
The Council of Ten;  
from a fifteenth-century  
manuscript  
(Musée Condé,  
Chantilly)

Eighteenth-century  
painting of the Council  
of Ten by Gabriel  
Bella  
(Fondazione Querini-  
Stampalia, Venice)

*Overleaf*  
'The Disembarkation of  
Caterina Cornaro in  
Venice' by Aliense  
(Museo Correr, Venice)





Sala Del Consiglio  
Di Dieci















handing over to Venice an island vital for her seaborne trade, and the diversity of the Republic's interests is suggested by the variety of craft the artist has depicted.

The question which immediately presents itself is to what extent did all this pageantry, and being the centre of attention, assuage Caterina's pain at what she was doing. Everything was leading up to the central ceremony.

On arrival in the Bacino the Bucentaur came alongside the Piazzetta. A procession was formed. At its head the Doge and Caterina, who was apparently accompanied by her brother George. There followed the dignitaries of the state, who, we are told, were marshalled with that careful regard for precedence which mattered so much to the Venetians. One account adds a telling detail. That is that George had several times to ask his sister to raise her hand to acknowledge the crowd. Was Caterina acutely aware that she was about to be queen in name only, or was she just tired after the long sea voyage?

Whatever the case, we do gain a vivid idea of what the procession in the Piazza must have looked like from a painting of uncertain date in the Museo Civico at Asolo. It contains manifestly curious details, but has a naïf appeal.

The climax was reached when the procession came to the basilica of St. Mark. Caterina was met by the Patriarch and many priests. There was a long and solemn address, then a *Te Deum* was sung, before the moment everyone had been waiting for and Caterina formally handed over the crown of Cyprus. A new and final chapter in her life had begun.

In return for Cyprus she was given Asolo, a little town which has not changed markedly over the centuries (today it has a population of a little over six thousand). It lies where the foothills come down to the Venetian plain, thirty-three miles as the crow flies from Venice, in a lovely situation. This was to be Caterina's 'dominio'. She was to have no real power, but to soften the blow she was to retain her titles and Venice made her an annual subvention of eight thousand ducats.

Once the ceremony in St. Mark's was over, another procession was formed. This time Caterina was escorted to the Palace of the Duke of Ferrara, later to be known as the Fondaco de' Turchi. The building, which, although badly restored in the nineteenth

*Opposite*

One of the many versions presumed to be a copy of a lost Titian portrait of Caterina (Cyprus Museum, Nicosia)



century, still stands, was in the fifteenth century used by the Venetian Republic to house distinguished guests. There Caterina stayed for three days.

One last detail needs to be noted. During the ceremonies George, the brother who had been so faithful to Venice, was rewarded when the Doge invested him with one of the Serenissima's highest honours, the Cavalierato di Stola d'Oro.

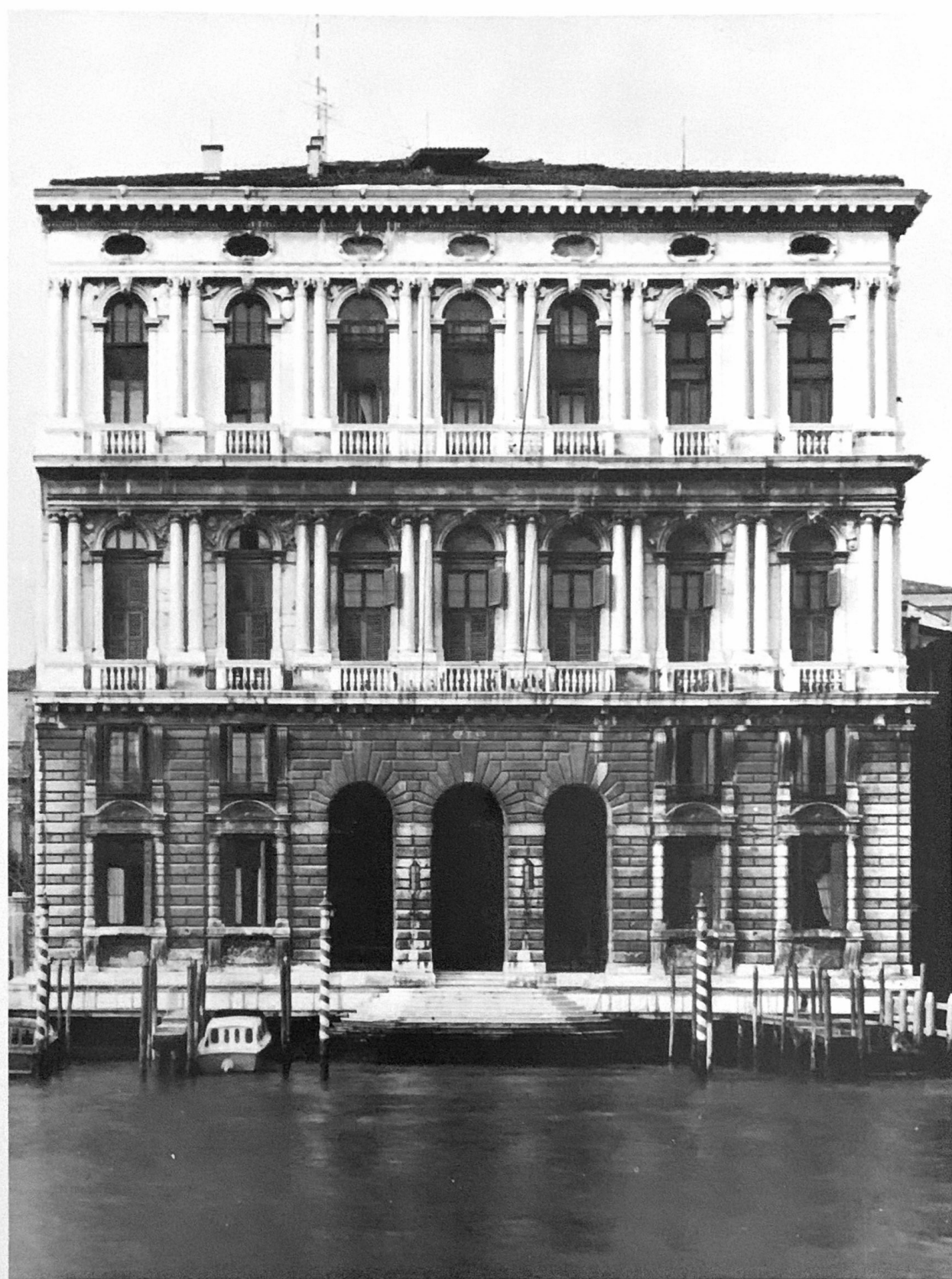
Ahead of Caterina were the years in which she was to wield little power. Why then did she capture the imagination of posterity?

There is at Attingham Park, in Shropshire, which today belongs to the National Trust, a painting 'A Concert at the Court of Caterina Cornaro' which has been attributed to Giorgione. It matters not at all that the picture is not by Giorgione: it is probably a nineteenth-century pastiche, although some have optimistically regarded it as being by a follower of Giorgione. Nor does it concern us that the stout, dreamy woman, her head resting in her hand as she listens to the music, bears little resemblance to Caterina. There is a truth about this painting going beyond the literal.

It points surely to the nature of the legend surrounding Caterina's life at Asolo. Popular history has it she kept a brilliant court; we are asked to believe that it encapsulated the values defined by Jacob Burckhardt in his *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*. Yet more recent scholars have dealt roughly with Burckhardt's golden image. This is not the case with Giorgione's work. The certain paintings by him and the considerable body of Giorgionesque pictures and drawings evoke one of the most potent moods in the history of European awareness. Medieval mysticism and Platonic doctrine coalesce in a moment of dewy freshness, touched with yearning. Pico della Mirandola might probe the Kabbalah for confirmation of the Christian mysteries, but Giorgione and his influence are not based upon the esoteric. It is persuasive, touches abiding springs. So does the legend of Caterina Cornaro.

Opposite  
Palazzo Corner, begun  
by Jacopo Sansovino  
after 1545, was one of  
the palaces of Caterina's  
family

On the left of the painting at Attingham there is a figure in armour making direct reference to the most perfect of all Giorgione's works. Here is an echo of the knight in his 'Tempesta', in the Accademia, in Venice. Whoever painted the





picture now at Attingham understood well the nature of Caterina's legend. How it grew up and whether it is close to the truth is a byway of history full of fascination. Facts in themselves trifling come together. Caterina's character begins to become clear. History and legend converge.

In the ceremonies marking her homecoming Caterina was paid rare honours. The Venetian state knew how when celebrating her sons and daughters to underline its own power. Caterina played her part, carrying herself well. Sanudo, who had an eye both for detail and for the finer things, notes that when she was led to St. Mark's Caterina was dressed in black velvet and was wearing jewels 'a la zipriota', but he also observes that she is a 'bella donna'. Whatever her personal feelings, loyalty to her native Venice and pleasure at the lavish reception she received must have been tempered by cynicism. If so she did not show it. This was not because she was malleable. When she was dispossessed by the Venetian Republic she had threatened to shut herself up in Kyrenia Castle, and that was only one of several comparable instances of her spirit.

One of the reasons why she accepted her new role with a good grace must have been purely practical. Her last days in Cyprus had been far from happy, for she was both deprived of the honours due to her position and short of money. There is little to suggest that her temperament was stormy, or that she was given to pessimism, and the humiliation and poverty which had concluded her previous role must, as she watched the ceremonies surrounding her return, have predisposed her to hope that her lordship of Asolo might prove both more dignified and, perhaps, even pleasurable. For her there were two very positive advantages. She was back close to her family, who were enormously rich and influential, and the Venetian state was actually in her debt.

At the moment of her homecoming such factors can scarcely have been uppermost in her mind. The splendour of her welcome would have precluded that. One can guess that practical considerations began to bulk large as soon as the ceremonies were over. In a sense she was lucky, for she at once settled in with her family in their splendid palace.

An important point emerges. There was no intemperate move

*Opposite*  
'Portrait of a Venetian  
Lady as St. Catherine of  
Alexandria', sometimes  
identified as Caterina  
Cornaro. It is probably  
a copy of a lost original  
by Titian  
(Uffizi, Florence)

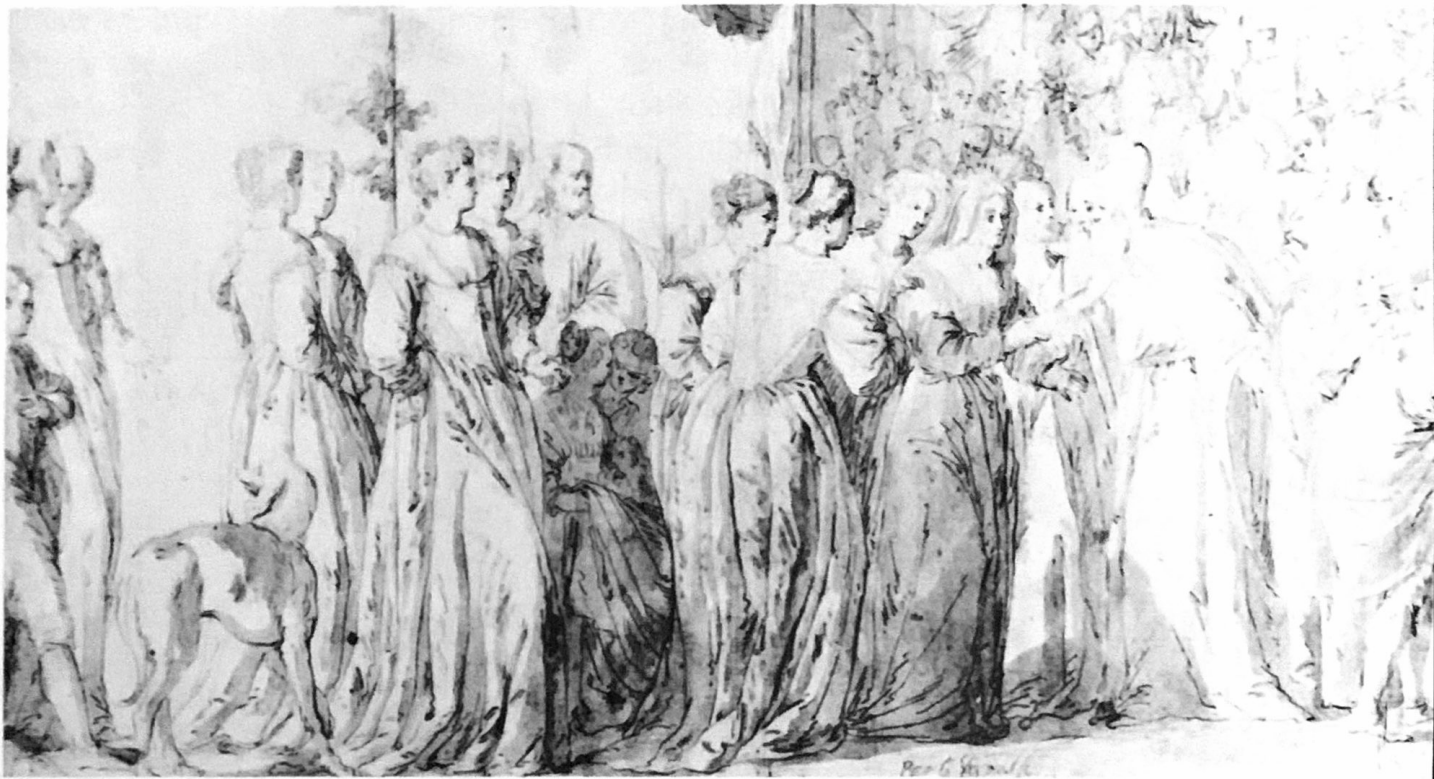












to Asolo. In fact Caterina dallied in Venice for four months: the galley which brought her from Cyprus reached the Lido on 5 June 1489, but she did not enter Asolo until 11 October. In the phase of her life that was beginning she was indeed to divide her time between Asolo, the countryside and Venice. The image of Caterina ruling in isolation over a brilliant court at Asolo, with relatively little contact with the outside world, and such an image is part of her legend, not only flies in the face of the political reality, but obscures what is notable about her 'rule' at Asolo. The time she spent there and the legend engendered reveal much about the age; she was part of its ethos.

On closer examination the facts surrounding Caterina's last years assume two apparently contradictory aspects. One encompasses her official, or more accurately her ceremonial role, while the other concerns her everyday life. Also a further distinction must be made between the romantic conception of how she spent her days and the reality.

Even after she moved to Asolo, and she was stripped of political significance, it would be wrong completely to dismiss as a sham the ceremonial side of Caterina's life. It was at the

Sixteenth-century drawing erroneously attributed to Paolo Veronese

*Opposite*  
Another version presumed to be a copy of a lost Titian portrait of Caterina  
(University of Melbourne, Australia)





Drawing by A. Manera  
dated 1862 showing the  
castle at Asolo as it was  
before 1820  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

beginning to be to the fore. When on 11 October she travelled north from Venice and entered her 'dominio' of Asolo she was accompanied by a considerable retinue. We know who were the most important of them. Not all were nonentities. There was Francesco Timideo, nicknamed Hurzio, who in the words of Colbertaldo was an 'excellente poeta e non mediocre filosofo,' the German doctor Giovanni Sigismondo and, no doubt reminding Caterina of the past, the Cypriot chaplain Davide Lamberti. We have, too, detailed accounts of what took place.

The documents need however to be treated with caution. The fifteenth century did not have a scrupulous regard for truth; sycophancy and the romantic, exaggeration, hyperbole in literary style, all recur in the chronicles. The seeds of Caterina's legend were sown in her own lifetime. No wonder that Victorian authors, followed by those writing in the earlier years of our own century, embroidered the story; it is, though, perfectly possible to sift the contemporary accounts, to decide with confidence what is likely to be factual, what is merely following convention and what is, with flattery or some other motive, calculated to

create an impression. It is also relevant to remember something which today is too often forgotten. The reaction against Walter Pater's evocation of the classical world, the ideals elaborated in his *Marius the Epicurean*, and against the idealistic view of the Renaissance presented by Burckhardt, has gone beyond salutary analysis. A new dogmatism, itself distorting truth, has been introduced.

It is necessary completely to discard the kind of romantic picture of Caterina's entry into Asolo presented by Horatio F. Brown. Writing in 1907, he uses an overlaid prose style, full of purple passages, and declares that 'all the people of her little principality, olive crowned and bearing olive branches in their hands, came out to meet their lady.' Leaving such passages aside the information available is enough to reconstruct what happened.

We do know that Caterina was greeted by approximately four thousand people not just from Asolo, but also from the surrounding area. The point is that an Italian crowd of four thousand on a festive occasion can be exuberant. Noise and colour would have played their part as, under a canopy, and we are told it was of cloth of gold, Caterina was escorted to the central piazza of Asolo.

She had already been greeted half way between Treviso and Asolo. Two distinguished Asolani, Taddeo Bovolini and Gerolamo Colbertaldo, had been sent to meet her and they knelt in the roadway.

The scene was more than animated, and Caterina must have been touched by the beauty of the place and the surrounding countryside. Immediately to the south is Castelfranco Veneto, Giorgione's birth-place, Treviso is nearby and Bassano is just to the west. Across the plain to the south-west, beyond Padua, the Euganean Hills can be seen on a clear day, while to the north Monte Grappa is less than ten miles away. Then to the north-east the lovely Valdobbiadene opens up, while beyond are the jagged peaks of the Dolomites. The hills are wooded, the air is fresh. Browning loved Asolo, other English people have escaped to the town and another woman, like Caterina a legend in her lifetime, Eleonora Duse, is buried there. Yet Asolo is still above all Caterina's 'dominio'.



She must have felt that the moment she arrived, as she was led to the cathedral and a solemn *Te Deum* was sung. On the day after her entry into the town, seated under the Loggia del Capitano in the spacious Piazza Maggiore she received an official welcoming address delivered by the *giureconsulto e letterato* Taddeo Bovolini. It was an occasion for the sonorous and the grandiloquent in Italian. Poetical translation is permissible, for it conveys an intimation of both the sound and the content of the original.

'Oh, happy land of Asolo, and oh, most happy flock that now hast found so just and sweet a shepherdess! Oh, ship thrice fortunate whose tiller lies in such skilful hand. Ye then, ye laurel boughs, the victor's meed, endure the sharp tooth of our knife that carves on you the name of Caterina.'

Asolo having greeted Caterina with fulsome flattery was rewarded. Soon after her arrival she set about ordering and embellishing her new home. The position was anomalous, even potentially contentious. There was no question of Asolo being an independent state; Caterina was not in the position to exercise her own foreign policy, nor did she have many of the attributes of real power. Her annual subvention from the Venetian state of eight thousand ducats was generous, but not lavish. She did, however, retain the title 'Cypri, Hierosolymorum ac Armeniae Regina', words that appear on her tombstone. It was all a kind of game. Caterina seems to have entered into it with a good grace. That she rapidly endeared herself to her people there is evidence.

She did not delay in setting about practical measures. They were of two kinds. Both were conditioned by a single, stark fact. The honours paid to Caterina were those worthy of a Queen of Cyprus. Yet the power in her hands would hardly do credit to the 'Signora di Asolo'. This being the case the measures Caterina undertook were creditable. One category had to do with the machinery of government, in so far as she was able to legislate, while the other concerned material things.

Soon after she settled in Asolo Caterina began to build, at the same time embellishing existing buildings. Thus she commissioned an altarpiece from Andrea da Murano for the church of S. Martino and gave the cathedral a sculptured baptismal font by Francesco Grazioli. Works of reconstruction and restoration

*Opposite*  
Fresco, originally in the  
castle at Asolo; it represents  
Bartolomeo Colbertaldo (1442-1505)  
holding a globe  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

*Overleaf*  
'The Doge Agostino  
Barbarigo Receives  
Caterina Cornaro in  
Venice'; painting  
bearing the date  
MCCCCCXV  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)









MCCCCCX











were also instigated.

More important were the new building projects undertaken by Caterina. Unfortunately comparatively little remains in Asolo bearing direct witness to what her immediate surroundings were like. The buildings surviving today are picturesque rather than revealing. It is not, though, difficult to conjure what life must have been like in Caterina's time. The vineyards and the mulberry groves still surround the town, there are little watercourses and the air is, after Venice, stimulating. The setting in which Caterina lived was never grand; there was no central pile like the castle in Ferrara or the Reggia in Urbino, nor was there a great complex of buildings as with the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua. What is sad is that all that today remains of her palace is the so-called Torre dell' Orologio, parts of the wall and a few other traces. However elsewhere in the town the atmosphere of the Renaissance is established by the Loggia del Capitano, in the Piazza Maggiore, a fine fifteenth-century building, with frescoes of the next century by Antonio Contarini, and by the 'Casa Lombarda', a structure of circa 1500 in the Viale S. Caterina, and a few other buildings.

There is not much else from Caterina's time, for Asolo has suffered from unnecessary demolition. The greater part of the Castello della Regina was pulled down in 1820, and over the years the town has continued to suffer, for even the splendid theatre, built in wood in 1798, was dismantled and shipped off to Sarasota, Florida, in the twentieth century.

Two buildings outside Asolo are, however, more revealing. They are Caterina's Barco, the villa she built nearby at Altivole, and the Villa dall' Aglio, at Lughignano sul Sile (Casale), which she erected between Treviso and Venice on the banks of the river Sile. It is at these two places that a real understanding of Caterina's court is possible. This is doubly appropriate, for the Villa dall' Aglio was a gift from Caterina to her maid of honour Fiammetta, on the occasion of the latter's marriage. We enter the world of Bembo.

Bembo's *Gli Asolani* is an eloquent document, providing insights into the mind of a cultivated Italian of the closing years of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth. At the same time it is crucial to an understanding of the world of

*Opposite*  
Detail from the  
previous painting  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)





The theatre, built in 1798 in the castle at Asolo, was dismantled and sold to the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida

Caterina. Above all it emphasises the role of the park at Asolo, of the Barco and of the Villa dall' Aglio. Her 'brilliant' court would not have fixed itself so surely in the minds of men if it were not for *Gli Asolani*. Both the legend of Caterina and, so much more intriguing and rewarding, the truth can be approached through this dialogue in which physical delight in sensation and affectation are, for the sensibilities of our day, dangerously mixed. Bembo's words, rightly interpreted, give expression to the kind of existence which was possible and, in many places in Italy, especially on the Venetian 'terra ferma', was a reality. Two such

spots were Caterina's Barco and the Villa dall' Aglio.

What today is also forgotten is the legislation Caterina was able to introduce. She instituted a *monte di pietà*, a pawnbroking bank, and when in 1505 famine approached she imported grain from Cyprus and distributed it. There were also fiscal reforms, along with measures relating to the administration of justice. The post of '*potestas regia*', or Royal Treasurer, was created and an official appointed to hear appeals. Equally telling new measures were promulgated relating to land tenure.

Yet in order to understand how and, above all, why Caterina became a legend, it is necessary to return to the Barco and to the Villa dall' Aglio and, just as surely, to Bembo but before exploring life in those places it is worth noting the everyday side of Caterina's affairs. Connections between the tableaux conjured up by Bembo, which were further romanticised in subsequent centuries, and the simple things she did for her people are relevant. It is easy when considering Caterina to be carried away, to accept and embroider, as have almost all her biographers. The image thus created is unreal. A critical study of the sources suggests something different. Caterina was a practical wench.

Equally cogent she was very much a child of her times and her place. Both have been subjected, at first consciously as an intellectual and literary conceit, then unconsciously, to a process of idealisation. Today we still tend to accept the glamourised view of Caterina, which finds expression in the account of her presented by Horatio F. Brown in his *Studies in the History of Venice*, published in 1907. The picture of Caterina he presents is a kind of verbal equivalent to much in late Victorian painting, with its romanticism tinged with sentiment, and even sentimentality. There are, in fact, a good many paintings illustrating this. Works such as 'Caterina Cornaro and her Court' by Hans Makart, and the equally extraordinary nineteenth-century print of 'The Venetian Senate Investing Caterina Cornaro with the Sovereignty of Asolo', an impression of which proudly hangs in the Municipio of Asolo, combine a profusion of figures and detail with endless little sentimental asides. Sharper in its impact is a painting by Francesco Hayez depicting the moment when Caterina's brother opens the window in her palace and points to the banner of St. Mark as he tries to persuade her that she is no



Unattributed bronze  
medal of Cardinal  
Pietro Bembo



longer in power. Though poses and lighting are theatrical this nineteenth-century painting, which belongs to the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo and hangs in the Donizetti theatre there, has about it a ring of truth. In retrospect it is easy to see that the events of Caterina's life were made for a composer like Donizetti who, although he died aged forty-six, with such facility tossed off sixty-five operas, including *Elisabetta a Kenilworth*, *Anna Bolena*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Maria Stuarda* and his much better known *La Fille du Régiment*. The legend of Caterina is indeed all there in the painting.

What is more it is surely indicative that composers other than Gaetano Donizetti have been attracted to Caterina's story. It is indeed the theme of operas by Fromental Halévy, Franz Paul Lachner, Michael William Balfe and Giovanni Pacini.

Make-believe is also to the fore in the portraits of Caterina. Many of them are apocryphal. Here is another manifestation of the legend surrounding her.

The position has been complicated, for several ostensibly knowledgeable studies of the portraits of Caterina have added to the confusion. In fact these uncritical essays, by Herbert Cook and others, have merely titillated the optimistic. Yet long ago, indeed in 1911, a German scholar, Emil Schaeffer, defined the position. Unfortunately absurd attributions and identifications of the sitter are still cherished. Copies of copies pass as portraits of Caterina.

The real position needs to be stated. One absolutely authentic portrait of Caterina exists: the quality is compulsive and the picture is in good condition. This is the likeness of her, painted in the years when she was at Asolo, by Gentile Bellini. Before this painting, in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, which it entered in 1836 as part of the bequest of Archbishop Pyrker, there are no doubts. All other supposed likenesses of her are forgotten. Here is reality. Almost everything else is either a copy, a distant witness of a lost work, or else merely apocryphal. Even in most of those paintings which are contemporary with Caterina, or nearly so, and represent scenes from her life, the types are generalised.

Nor was this, the Budapest portrait, the only occasion on which Gentile Bellini painted her. Caterina appears again, this

*Opposite*  
'A Young Man' by  
Giovanni Bellini, which  
probably represents  
Pietro Bembo  
(The Royal Collection)

*Overleaf*  
Majolica plate (Urbino  
c. 1510) made for  
Cardinal Bembo. The  
scene derives from a  
drawing by Michel-  
angelo for a painting in  
the Palazzo Vecchio,  
Florence  
(British Museum)

Font made by Fran-  
cesco Grazioli and  
donated by Caterina in  
1491 to the people of  
Asolo  
(The Cathedral, Asolo)











time kneeling at the right hand end of a line of women in the left bottom corner of his 'The Miracle of the Cross', one of that series of pictures in the Accademia, in Venice, from which we learn so much about what Venice and Venetians looked like. This is instructive. 'The Miracle of the Cross' was painted in 1500, and in the Budapest portrait Caterina is wearing the identical dress and there are good reasons for believing that it was executed at the same time. Caterina would then have been in her middle forties.

In the Budapest portrait we see a woman of presence and character. She is not beautiful. It is easy to feel that no subject of myths confronts us. Rather there is room to wonder how and why legends grew up around this woman. A sense of immediacy, the gift of the worthwhile portrait, is however overwhelming. The character of the sitter, her foibles, her charms, the nature of her impact are less certain. Tactile qualities are implied; the weight of her body is evident, we note the lustrous hair, the full breasts, like the well formed ear, observe the determined mouth, while wondering what the glance of the brown eyes, a little heavy, but shrewd, implies.

János László Pyrker, who rose to prominence as Archbishop of Eger before going on to be Patriarch of Venice, from 1822 to 1827, doubtless acquired the picture during those years. He brought home with him a portrait in which a point in time, Caterina's moment, has been fixed.

Looking at this likeness we are on several levels fascinated. For the student of costume and jewellery it is an indispensable document. Yet in a strange way, suggesting the essence of its fascination, Gentile Bellini's interpretation of a middle-aged woman is timeless. If we can learn from this portrait we approach Caterina. A woman standing before a dark background, decked out in the finery of her time, reveals both its patterns of thought and sensibility and its conventions, while also personifying unchanging facets of humanity. This is not all: she is also an individual.

Intriguing too was a profile portrait in pen and watercolour in the Kunsthalle, in Bremen, which was lost in the Second World War, and which Panofsky and others believe to be by Dürer. The point is it did have strong claims to be of Caterina, and

*Opposite*  
Details on the font; the arms of the Kingdom of Cyprus flanked by the insignia of the Order of the Sword and The Madonna and Child (The Cathedral, Asolo)



Panofsky has propounded the theory that it was based on a panel painting by or after Gentile Bellini, which Dürer saw when he was in Venice.

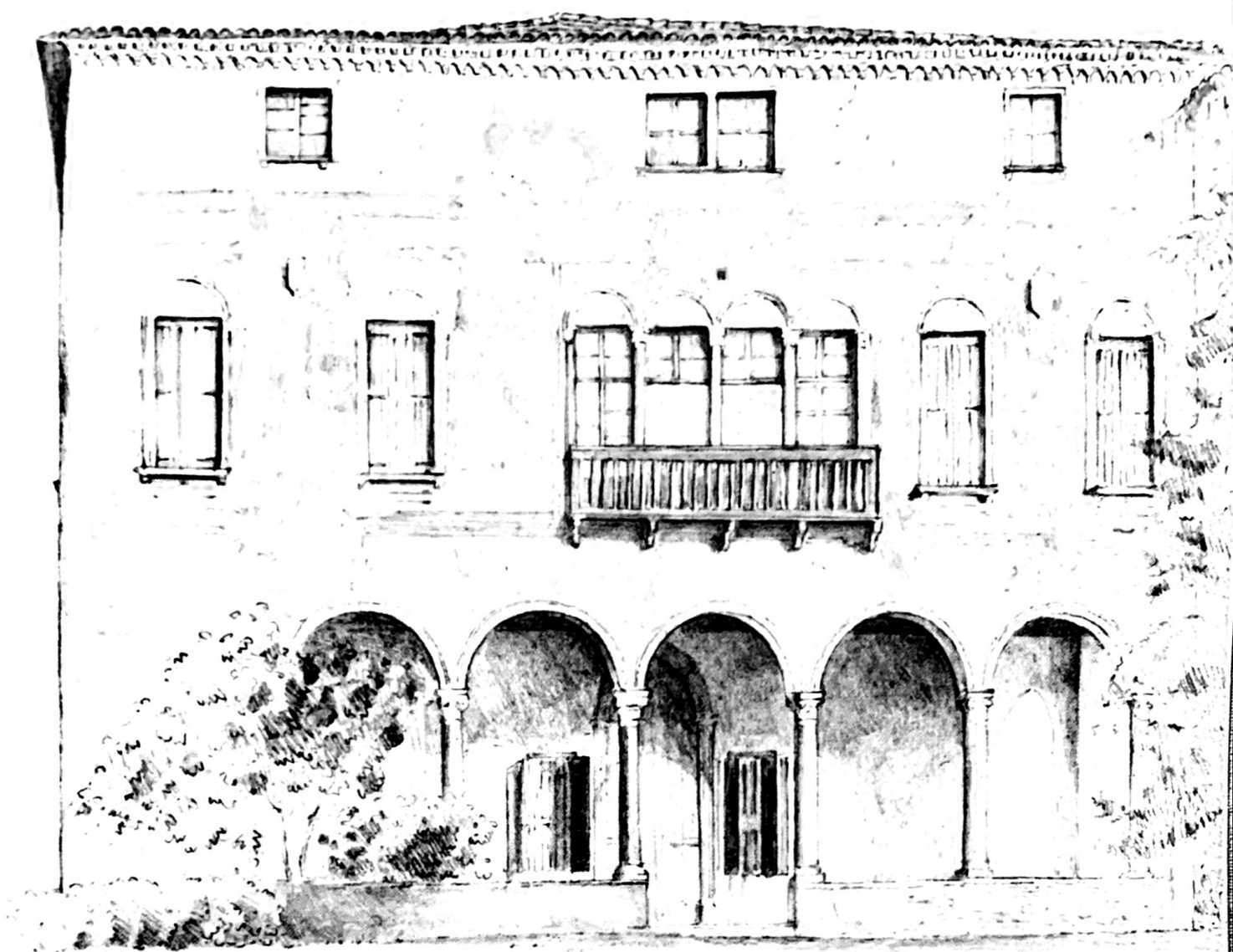
Compelling as Gentile Bellini's portrait is, others lost to us would have told us as much. Both Vasari, writing in 1568, when he says the picture belonged to Giovanni Cornaro, and Ridolfi in 1648 refer to a portrait of Caterina by Giorgione, and Pietro Aretino himself saw it. To conjure what this picture must have been like is tempting, but it would be sheer speculation.

Fortunately we are on firmer ground with a lost portrait of Caterina by Titian. Ridolfi seems to have been the only early author to document such a painting, but his passage suggests that he had actually seen it, for he says that 'con la maniera stessa retrasse la regina Caterina Cornaro in abito vedovile campeggiando tra nere spoglie il candore delle carni.'

One thing is certain. This picture is not the wonderful Titian portrait in the National Gallery in London, which is more correctly known as 'La Schiavona'. The theory was postulated at the beginning of this century by Sir Herbert Cook and the only wonder is that it was ever accepted. Not only does the lady in Titian's portrait bear no resemblance to Caterina, but Caterina died in 1510 aged fifty-six, while this portrait, which must have been painted circa 1511-1512, shows a much younger woman. Faith in Sir George Hill, the author of the celebrated *A History of Cyprus*, is shaken by his acceptance of this portrait as being of Caterina. That he gives credence to the implausible theory that it is a portrait of her painted during her lifetime, when she was about forty-five, and then drastically remodelled between forty and fifty years later, does nothing to restore confidence in him.

In fact Hill is little better than most of those who have attempted to identify portraits of Caterina. He was no art historian and his treatment of them, despite copious footnotes, is confused and misleading.

There is however a group of works of modest quality which may reflect a lost Titian portrait. Some are painfully crude, while others, such as the picture in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, are of interest. Not surprisingly these paintings, which show Caterina in sombre attire, have passed under a variety of attributions ranging from 'School of Bellini' to Titian. In all of them she has



her left hand outstretched, and looks as though she is in the act of acknowledging a greeting, or perhaps she is about to make a speech.

Far better is the 'St. Catherine of Alexandria', in the Uffizi, which, despite the saint's attribute, is clearly a portrait. Still we are not faced by a genuine Titian of Caterina. Nevertheless the painting has, helped on by inferior versions, given rise to a further mythology as to Caterina's appearance. So obstinate is the desire to identify likenesses of her that even in recent years facts have been ignored. The picture is neither by Titian, nor does it represent Caterina. Wethey in his great Titian monograph

Villa dall' Aglio at Lughignano sul Sile (Casale) commissioned by Caterina as a wedding present for her maid of honour Fiammetta



is surely correct when he noted that 'the hard dull quality suggests a copy although elegance of pose and bearing reflect a splendid original.'

Identifying sitters is habitually difficult: the question as to whether this is Caterina is not as clear as is the attribution. Many have indeed seen in the Uffizi portrait an ideal likeness of her. Certainly it is not from life, for an inscription on the back of the canvas reads 'TITIANI OPVS ANNO 1542,' and the date is thirty-two years after Caterina's death. Whether or not the Uffizi portrait is a copy of an ideal likeness executed in Titian's maturity there is, as Wethey noted, little positive evidence. A much younger woman than the one in Gentile Bellini's portrait is presented to us, but even allowing for the changes wrought by age it is hard to believe that these two paintings represent the same sitter.

With other portraits said to be of Caterina we enter the world of fantasy. Anent this it is relevant to remember that Ridolfi, writing in 1648, declared that many copies had been made from Titian's portrait of Caterina and he further noted that due to the vicissitudes of the times many of them had left home. If that was the case a little more than one hundred years after she died, it is hardly surprising that, since then, the faithful have added to the canon.

Works which on flimsy grounds are claimed to represent Caterina from life fall into two main groups. Some are of respectable quality, but have nothing to do with her, while the other group consists of pictures of modest quality. What is interesting is that certain of these poor things do probably convey some memory of what Caterina looked like.

If only to dispel dreams, it is worthwhile recording some of the many paintings which have duped the uncritical. In the first category, that is of merit, is a portrait in Vienna, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, which Berenson believed was by Veronese. This is improbable; attributions to Antonio Badile and Fasolo better indicate its quality. In any case there is little to suggest that the sitter is Caterina, although this lively middle-aged woman does bear a passing resemblance to her. Quite certainly not Caterina is the woman, who has also been called Giulia Gonzaga Colonna and Titian's daughter Lavinia, appear-

*Opposite*  
Portrait of a young girl  
said to represent  
Caterina  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

*Overleaf*  
'The Venetian Senate  
Invests Caterina Cornaro with the Sovereignty  
of Asolo'; R. Cresci  
(Municipio, Asolo)



















ing in a poor portrait in Washington in the Samuel H. Kress Collection in the National Gallery. Nor is this picture by Titian as some art historians have, rather surprisingly, claimed. Also to be dismissed is the portrait of which there are a number of versions, one of the best being in Sarasota, Florida, where it is in the John and Mabel Ringling Museum. The sitter has been identified as Caterina, which has nothing to recommend it and, a trifle more plausibly, as the 'Sultana Rossa', the favourite wife of Süleyman I.

None of these works is anything other than a copy, perhaps after Titian. Equally to be dismissed as Caterina are the girl holding a crown of roses at Apsley House, a picture in Dresden, in the Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, and another published by Suida as being in a Milanese private collection; these are only the better versions of a portrait certainly not of Caterina and, at best, only memories of another lost Titian. Yet even this may be optimistic: these pictures, sometimes so boldly labelled as portraits of Caterina, are of varying quality and some of them are clearly of a much later date.

The position is intriguing and we do move closer to Caterina with a further category of painting. These are the big scenes of incidents from Venetian history of which the Republic was so fond and many of which crowd the Doge's Palace, particularly in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio and in the Sala dello Scrutinio. Of particular interest is Aliense's 'The Disembarkation of Caterina Cornaro in Venice', in the Museo Correr, which has already been mentioned in connection with her return from Cyprus.

More curious is the painting of Caterina renouncing her crown, which is on the ceiling of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Doge's Palace. It was painted long after her death, and confusion has resulted from a wrong attribution to Palma Giovane. In fact it is by Leonardo Corona and, given the representation of the figures in profile, may be linked with the splendid monument to Caterina in the church of S. Salvatore. It does have a certain ring of truth about it.

Also of interest are various sixteenth-century drawings, such as the red chalk and grey wash study correctly described as 'The Doge receiving the Queen of Cyprus', which was sold at Sotheby's in 1971. This particular sheet bears an old attribution

*Opposite*  
Portrait of a young girl  
said to represent Caterina  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)





'Queen Caterina Cornaro Cedes her Crown to the Venetian Republic'; the picture shows the symbolic handing over of the crown to the Doge Agostino Barbarigo; ceiling painting by Leonardo Corona (Sala del Maggior Consiglio, Doge's Palace, Venice)

to Veronese, by whom it certainly is not, but it is contemporary with him. Again we are reminded that the Venetian awareness of history has led to a continuing preoccupation with Caterina.

In a different category, for it is a work of art of compulsive quality and at the same time very mysterious, is a pen drawing in the Royal Collection (Windsor Castle), which is undoubtedly by Dürer. It represents a complicated 'allegory' and is inscribed 'Pupila Augusta'. Although he was vigorously challenged, Panofsky persisted in believing the drawing refers to Caterina. What must be remembered is that Cyprus was the mythical realm of Venus, and the sheet can be interpreted as showing the arrival of Venus, eulogistically compared with Caterina, on the island.

Not of use as sources of information about Caterina are most of the other paintings and drawings which have at various times been associated with her. They range from things which have nothing whatever to do with her, like the drawing in the Uffizi

published by Herbert Cook, to works which, although mediocre, do at least betray a touching concern with the legend of 'the lady of Asolo'.

Very odd too are most of the busts which have been identified as representing Caterina. At best they represent fairly typical middle-aged Renaissance women, and do suggest the kind of characteristics with which she was imbued.

How then can the evidence of the portraits be supplemented? In attempting to reconstruct Caterina's life in Asolo one thing should not be overlooked. Nothing is easier than to become cynical about the legend that has grown up around her: the more one becomes immersed in her affairs, the more her brilliant court to which so many writers have glibly alluded seems not to have existed. There was no court in the sense of a large or permanent institution. This is, though, a case where undue cynicism can lead to just as grave a distortion as has romantic piety. We should be forewarned by the fact that many of her contemporaries found Caterina intriguing. Civilised men were attracted to her.

A case in point is Marino Sanudo (1466-1533), the Venetian historian and chronicler, whose most important work, the *Diarii*, was finally properly edited by R. Fulin and others and published in Venice between 1879 and 1903. This daunting work, which runs to fifty-eight volumes, covering the period from 1 January 1496 to September 1533, contains a medley of references to Caterina. They are often trifling or in passing, but they help to build up a picture not just of her doings, but equally of her contemporaries' view of her. Thus on 24 June 1499 George Cornaro speaks *in collegio* about affairs concerning Treviso and includes a phrase about his sister, the Queen. Then in December 1501 the death of her mother is recorded, in September 1505 the marriage of one of her nieces, in May 1508 her own illness, and so it goes on. Occasionally the references to her are longer and are thoroughly informative. Thus in September 1497 Sanudo records a letter written by Nassino de Nassinis, whom he describes as 'orator di quella comunità a la Signoria nostra', which recounts Caterina's entry into Brescia.

This particular visit is one of those events in her life after her return to Italy which can be reconstructed in depth. She went to Brescia in the summer of 1497 in order to visit her brother who



had been elected *podestà* there. First at Bassano, then at Vicenza and later at Verona Caterina and her retainers were lavishly received and homage was paid to her by the 'rettori Veneziani' and the *comunità*. Everything seems to have been well calculated to divert the ex-Queen's mind from the memories of Cyprus.

The honours really began when she entered Brescian territory. Her brother met her at Desenzano 'con decente compagnia.' Then, at the Ponte S. Marco, she was greeted by forty 'zoveni cittadini' on horseback, each carrying the arms of Cornaro and Lusignan. This was far from being all: at Rezzato she was hailed by armed men led by the Conte di Pitagliano and by Francesco Mocenigo, Capitano of Brescia, who had with him an even larger escort, while at Santa Eufemia she was saluted by 'la capetania con più di sessanta donne a cavallo.'

Her actual entry into the city of Brescia was on Monday 4 September by way of the Porta S. Nazzaro. First came men at arms, then the clergy, followed by the leading citizens. Caterina herself was under a *baldacchino* of white satin in a chariot drawn by four white horses horned like unicorns. It was the sort of spectacle that was staged to perfection during the Renaissance. Even the streets were strewn with carpets and there were banners in profusion. Indeed Sanudo records that the Brescians had allotted ten thousand ducats for the festivities.

The *Oratore* seems hardly to have been exaggerating when he wrote that 'if it had been the "serenissimo-principe di Venezia" or the Emperor nothing more could have been done or more ordered.' To spectacle was added graceful allegory and festive pageant. The procession was saluted by Diana and the nymphs who attended her in a triumphal car. It must have been a long day for Caterina, who then went to S. Maria dei Miracoli to pause in prayer, before proceeding to the Palazzo Martinengo, where lodgings, which we are told were superb, had been prepared for her.

There followed a day of rest. It was needed, for on the Wednesday there was a *grande festa*. During it the learned Giovanni Battista Appiani delivered a welcoming address. Not content with this celebrations went on for twelve days. On the following Sunday games were held in her honour, with illustrious champions taking part. Present, too, incognito, was the

*Opposite*

Head-band and purse  
said to have belonged to  
Caterina  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

*Overleaf*

Spherical metal pom-  
ander showing eastern  
influence, said to have  
belonged to Caterina  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

General view of Asolo

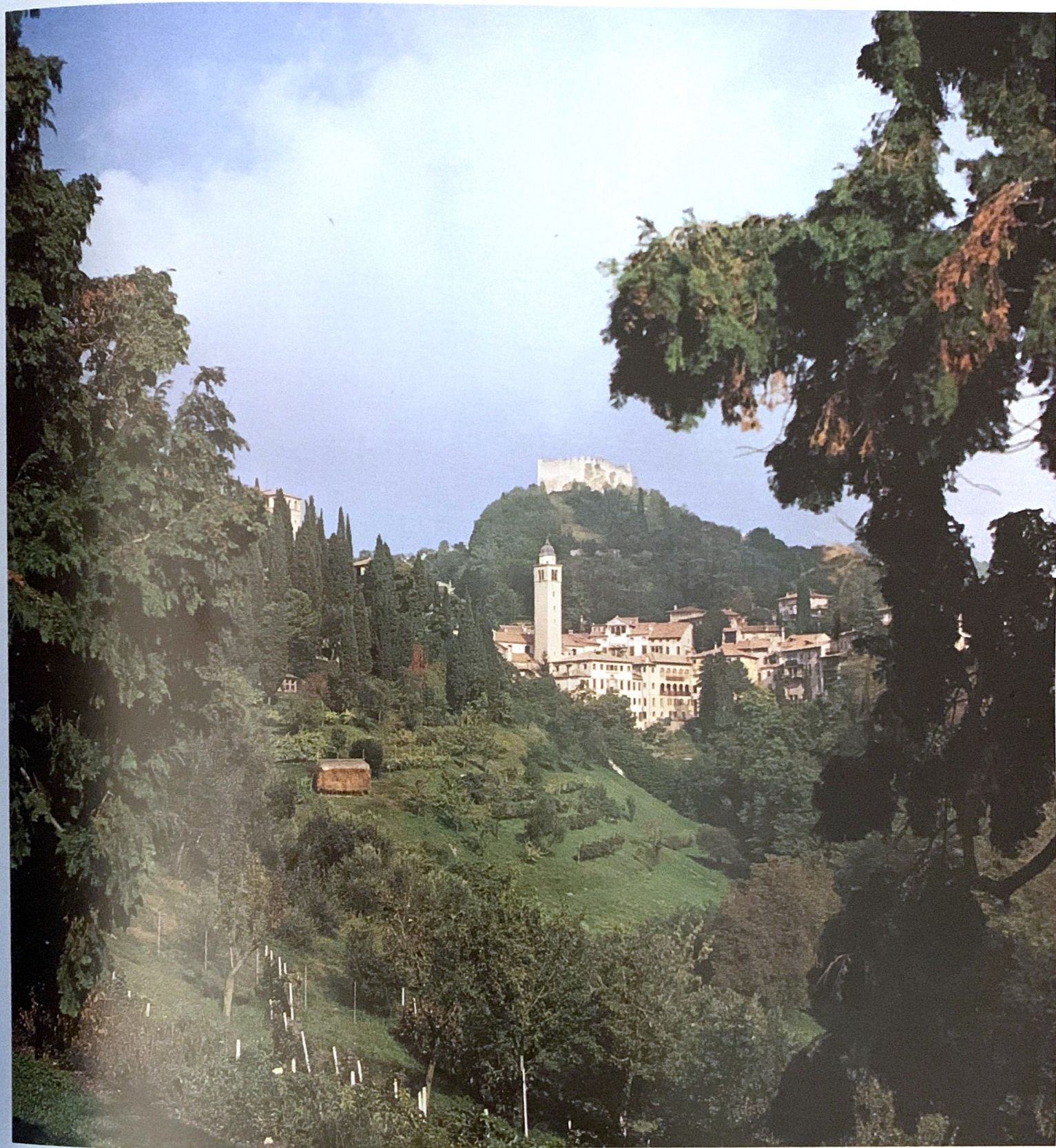


















Marchese di Mantova. Then there were jousts by torchlight, and the proceedings were enlivened by such conceits as helmets from whose crests burst flames.

Most of Caterina's life was, however, not like her twelve days in Brescia. It was more domestic and, paradoxically, recognition of this gets us closer to why it is of such interest. We have a considerable mass of evidence. First it is necessary to be clear about two issues. Did Caterina preside over what may be called a court, and with whom was she in touch? The second question is not difficult to answer: given her own status and the standing of her family, she was in contact not just with the patrician class, those who mattered in Venice, but equally with the men of letters, ideas and with artists.

It is relevant that Caterina was by no means limited to Asolo. In effect she had homes in four places; the castle in Asolo, her villa in the country, the celebrated Barco, her family's palaces in Venice, and a palace on Murano. She made effective use of all of them. Thus in 1493, on Ascension Day, she entertained on Murano Isabella d'Este, Marchesa di Mantova, while on 11 June of the same year, again at the Villa Cornaro on Murano, she received the Duchessa Beatrice Sforza to a meal, and the latter wrote to her husband that she had a 'bella collazione'. The main family palace in Venice was also much used by Caterina; not only was there in 1500 a reception in the palace for the marriage of her maid of honour, Fiammetta, but in 1507, we know from Sanudo, another gathering was held there, on 23 September, for the marriage of her nephew Filippo Capello. Particularly significant is the fact that on this occasion there was a recital of a 'commedia'. This is more remarkable than is immediately apparent. Indeed this 'commedia' was among the earliest theatrical performances, in the classic mould, held in Venice. Caterina was very much in contact with what was fashionable in both the arts and thought, but she equally seems to have had a penchant for intellectual and emotional stimulation.

Inevitably given these interests Caterina was in contact with men such as Andrea Navagero (1483-1529), who was a key figure for the sensibility of his time. Not only was he ambassador to Madrid, but as a man of letters he was to have an influence beyond Italy, giving a fresh direction to the work of the Spanish

*Opposite*  
Via Dante, Asolo





poet Juan Boscan Almogaver, who founded a productive poetic school.

Inescapably Navagero's mind was of the moment. His life was not long, but his faculties were richly cultivated. He was of Venetian origin, but, before he returned to his native city in April 1516, he was in Rome the intimate of Baldassare Castiglione, Tommaso Inghirami, Bembo, Agostino Beazzano and others of scholarship and literary achievement. Even in his early years, when he was in contact with Caterina, the mind of the man whom Raphael painted in a great double-portrait with Beazzano, today in the Galleria Doria-Pamfili, in Rome, must have had a quicksilver quality. It was allied to poetical yearning. Besides revealing Navagero, Raphael's portrait does have another bearing upon the world of Asolo and the Barco, for it was almost certainly painted for Bembo. This is doubly appropriate, for it was he who after Navagero's death wrote: 'Poor Navagero was a most rare being, who could not fail to do honour to his country.' Caterina was indeed in touch with many of the choicest minds of her age.

The precise nature of Caterina's contacts with Navagero, and several others like him, is relevant to an understanding of her character and her world. What is not clear is whether he was often at Asolo and if he can be regarded as, in any sense, being a member of Caterina's court. Various scholars have argued about this point. It is an issue of detail of no great weight. What is certain is that in Asolo, Venice or Murano Caterina would have been in touch with him, while, really more indicative, his work and his mode of thought would, both directly and indirectly, have coloured her world.

Two literary figures who we definitely know were in Asolo are Antonio Colbertaldo (1476-1553), who wrote on Caterina's life, and his intimate the Vicentine Luigi da Porto (1485-1529), whose novella *Giulietta e Romeo* was in its day celebrated. Such men must have made Asolo seem civilised: further the very fact that Luigi da Porto and Giambattista Liliani went to stay in Asolo with Antonio Colbertaldo is indicative.

Closer to Caterina was Bartolomeo Colbertaldo (1442-1505), the uncle of Antonio, who was even created 'vice gerente' of Asolo, when in the autumn of 1497 Caterina, along with the

*Opposite*  
A pen drawing by Dürer of an allegory inscribed 'Pupila Augusta'. Some scholars believe it refers to Caterina (The Library, Windsor Castle)



*Podestà*, Nicolò Priuli, fled to Venice in the face of the Ottoman troops of Bayazid II, who had invaded the Friuli and penetrated as far as Conegliano. Bartolomeo Colbertaldo was indeed a man of parts: he had at first, in 1465, gone to Padua, where he studied law and, after he returned to his native Asolo, established a brilliant reputation for the practice of law. This was not enough, for Bartolomeo also became a priest and thereafter appears in the documents as 'dottore' and 'canonico'. Indeed he continued to debate and hand down the law, actually dying of an apoplectic fit when administering justice, under the loggia in the piazza at Asolo. One can guess how Caterina's ladies must have gossiped about such an event.

The Colbertaldos were not the only members of leading families from Asolo who played a direct role in the affairs of Caterina's reign. Nor were such families parochial in their outlook: Giovanna Farolfi, one of the Queen's ladies, who has been remembered because of gossip in the chronicles about her grand ways, was from a family that had moved to Asolo only around the middle of the fifteenth century, but had quickly established themselves in positions of influence. That they came from Ferrara is revealing, for it makes the point that Asolo's contacts were not just with Venice and the cities of the Venetian dominions on the mainland.

Discourse was more than an expression of the pretensions of Caterina's 'court'. Often it was about things that mattered and was lively. The word 'brilliant' has been too often and lightly used to describe the Queen's circle, but spirited it certainly was. This was the moment in history when the Aldine Press was transforming man's horizons. Caterina would in particular have known the Aldine Aristotle, Aldus Manutius' first major publishing venture, and the great illustrated books of her day, such as the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, along with the First Edition of the *De claris mulieribus* of Jacobus Philippus Foresti Bergomensis, published in Ferrara in 1497.

Less easy to measure is the degree of sophistication of the Queen and those about her. It is certain they were in touch with the latest modes of thought. Witty reinterpretation of ideas and sentiments, and with Bembo their inception, is one of the claims upon posterity of the kind of existence Caterina fostered in Asolo

*Opposite*  
'Caterina Cornaro' by  
Gentile Bellini. This is  
the only certain contem-  
porary portrait of the  
Queen  
(Budapest Museum of  
Fine Arts)

*Overleaf*  
'The Miracle of the  
Cross' by Gentile Bel-  
lini. Caterina appears  
kneeling at the nearest  
end of the row of ladies  
on the left  
(Accademia, Venice)



















and at the Barco.

It nurtured the talents of men who rose above the ordinary. Besides the outstanding figures such as Navagero and Bartolomeo Colbertaldo, we know the names of many others. They include Taddeo Bovolini (1450-1513), who was above all a jurist, served in various public positions in Asolo and whose family home was on the Piazza del Mercato and Giambattista Liliani (1486?-1550), priest, jurist and poet, who when only twenty visited Asolo as a guest of the Colbertaldos and was inspired to write his long poem in Latin in praise of Asolo and Caterina. It is not irrelevant that, like him, many of those about her were young. Liliani's work, published in Venice in 1507, hints at the fascination the place exerted over sensitive, impressionable souls. Even more intriguing when we remember Pietro Lazzaroni's poem *De duodecim eximiis virtutibus, quibus coronatur consumata regina et quibus fulgere concernimus coronam serenissimae Katerinae Cypri reginae dignissimae*, written while Caterina was still in Cyprus, is the implication that there was something about her that prompted the poets.

The greatest expression of this is the work of Bembo. It is not simply that he is a key figure of the Renaissance. His *Gli Asolani*, for which he is most often remembered, sheds lustre upon Caterina. Indeed so good a scholar as the late Harold Wethey wrote of *Gli Asolani* that it 'is her chief claim to fame'. Before examining this statement it is well to consider Bembo and to analyse his masterpiece.

Pietro Bembo was born in Venice in 1470. He was to become a cardinal and as secretary to Leo X he played his part in the politics of the church, but getting us closer to the real man is the fact that, before he died in 1547, he was also Librarian of St. Mark's and historiographer of his native city. Bembo, from the time his father took him, while still a boy, to Florence where he fell under the spell of the Tuscan dialect, loved the Italian tongue. Above all he was an archetypal man of the Renaissance. This is suggested by the portrait by Giovanni Bellini in the Royal Collection which probably is of Bembo. If it is not, it nevertheless conveys his temper.

Bembo's *Gli Asolani* is a curious work, in many respects tedious. Its importance is on two levels. Language is employed in

Opposite  
Detail from Gentile  
Bellini's 'The Miracle  
of the Cross'  
(Accademia, Venice)





'The Court of Caterina  
Cornaro'; nineteenth-  
century painting by  
Hans Makart

a way that was to be seminal and, it is to be remembered, it was in Italian, not Latin, hitherto the chosen vehicle of those immersed in scholarship and poetry. However this does not in the present context directly concern us. *Gli Asolani* is crucial as a document of the times and for what it tells us about Caterina's 'court'. Indeed the pretext for its conception was the wedding of one of the Queen's maids of honour.



Equally revealing is the fact that the book was dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia, thus linking Caterina with the court at Ferrara, one of the most brilliant centres of the Renaissance.

*Gli Asolani* was written before 1502 and published in 1505. The work consists of dialogues between three young men and three young ladies at their dalliance in a corner of Caterina's park at Asolo. Everything about it is contrived, even at times forced,



certainly artificial. This does not detract from its value as a witness of the age. Bembo may not have spent much time at Asolo. That is irrelevant: indicative is the fact that he chose to make Caterina's court the setting of *Gli Asolani*. Nor are its merits, apart from its importance and its influence, the main factors. *Gli Asolani* is a young man's work, tainted with the faults of youth, yet it entraps what is choice in the spirit of the moment. Just as in the palaestra the physical is transmuted into rhythms of beauty, so Bembo in *Gli Asolani* relieves his overelaborate, even stilted prose with intimations of poetic insight.

The form of *Gli Asolani* is measured, pedantic. Bembo owes a debt to the *Canzoniere* of Petrarch. One young man, Perottino, denigrates love, with a nice play upon the words 'amore' and 'amaro'; another, Gismondo, defends love; while the third, Lavinello, draws the threads together. Ellis Waterhouse, with his refined sensibility, in his W.A. Cargill lecture at Glasgow University, linked Giorgione's Castelfranco Madonna to Bembo's great work. There is, too, in *Gli Asolani* a clue to something else. The magic of Caterina's world can be discerned. More is involved than a conventional court.

It was not limited to Asolo. At Altivole, not far from Asolo, Caterina built her Barco. It was erected quickly, between 1490 and 1492. We are told that there was a large estate surrounded by a massive wall. A magnificent palace stood in the middle; other smaller buildings were scattered around. The size of the estate seems in this contemporary account to have been much exaggerated, but many have waxed lyrical about the Barco della Regina. According to several sources, over the entrance Giorgione painted Caterina riding out to the hunt on a white horse. There have also been other distortions; thus the number of her retainers has been grossly inflated. The splendour of the Barco has become a thing of the mind, rather than of archaeology. Little enough remains today.

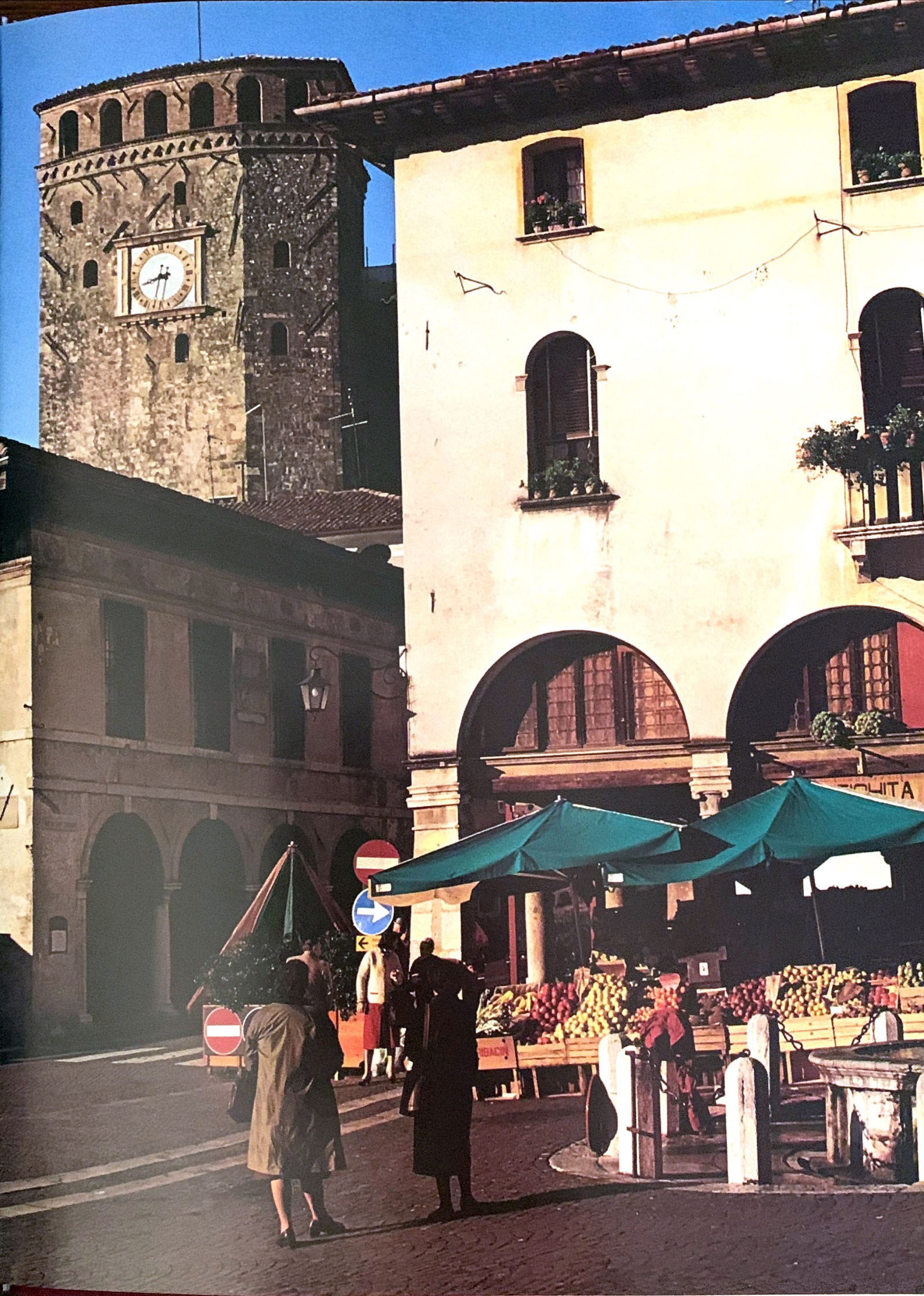
Fortunately much sensible labour has been devoted to reconstructing the appearance of the Barco. Old accounts have been sifted, documents have been examined and plans, maps and drawings have been found. Above all in her *The Villa Giustinian at Roncale* Carolyn Kolb Lewis includes a meticulous study of

*Opposite*  
The Torre dell' Orologio, the most substantial remaining portion of Caterina's official residence, the Castello della Regina at Asolo

*Overleaf*  
View of Asolo from the top of the Torre dell' Orologio

View of Asolo from the Villa Cipriani



















the Barco and publishes a mass of material. Furthermore revealing comparisons can be made with other buildings on the terra ferma, and even beyond it.

In particular it is instructive to compare Caterina's Barco with the Castello Sforzesco at Vigevano, in Lombardy. It owes its present form to Luchino Visconti, in the years 1345-1350, and his work was continued by Gian Galeazzo and Galeazzo Maria Sforza. More interesting, in the years from 1492, that is exactly when Caterina was building her Barco, Ludovico il Moro completed the building. There are indeed comparisons to be made between Vigevano and what we know of the Barco that help us to visualise the appearance of the latter. In any case the image of the Barco is reasonably clear.

Certain points, such as the number of Caterina's retainers and how she fed them, are open to discussion. What in general terms the Barco looked like, along with the nature of life there, is established. Today all we have is a long low range of buildings, the *barchessa* with its elegant central arcade. There are exterior frescoes, considerably damaged, which were carefully restored in 1961-1962, but have since further deteriorated. Of the rest of the building, of the fountains and of the pavilions nothing remains.

A contrast is provided by the Villa dall' Aglio, at Lughignano sul Sile. It had been abused; windows had been bricked up, fruit boxes piled under the portico, but recently it has been restored and basically it stands four square as it did when it was built beside the river Sile in the last years of the fifteenth century. Here lived Fiammetta, Caterina's maid of honour, for the villa was built for her by Caterina as a wedding present. There is a vital dichotomy. The Villa dall' Aglio was a gift worthy of a Queen. Yet it is a typical villa of the Venetian terra ferma. There are hundreds of others like it along the Brenta and the Sile, away to the east into the Friuli, south to the flood banks of the Po and the Adige, and to the west as far as Verona and beyond. Even at the height of their splendour in Caterina's day the Villa dall' Aglio and the Barco could be paralleled. Why then are they still touched with magic?

Partly it is Caterina. There must have been something special about the woman. Today the word charisma is lightly abused, but in the context of the 'Domina' of Asolo it should be invoked.

*Opposite*  
Via Browning, Asolo



DE GLIASOLANI DI M.  
PIETRO BEMBO,

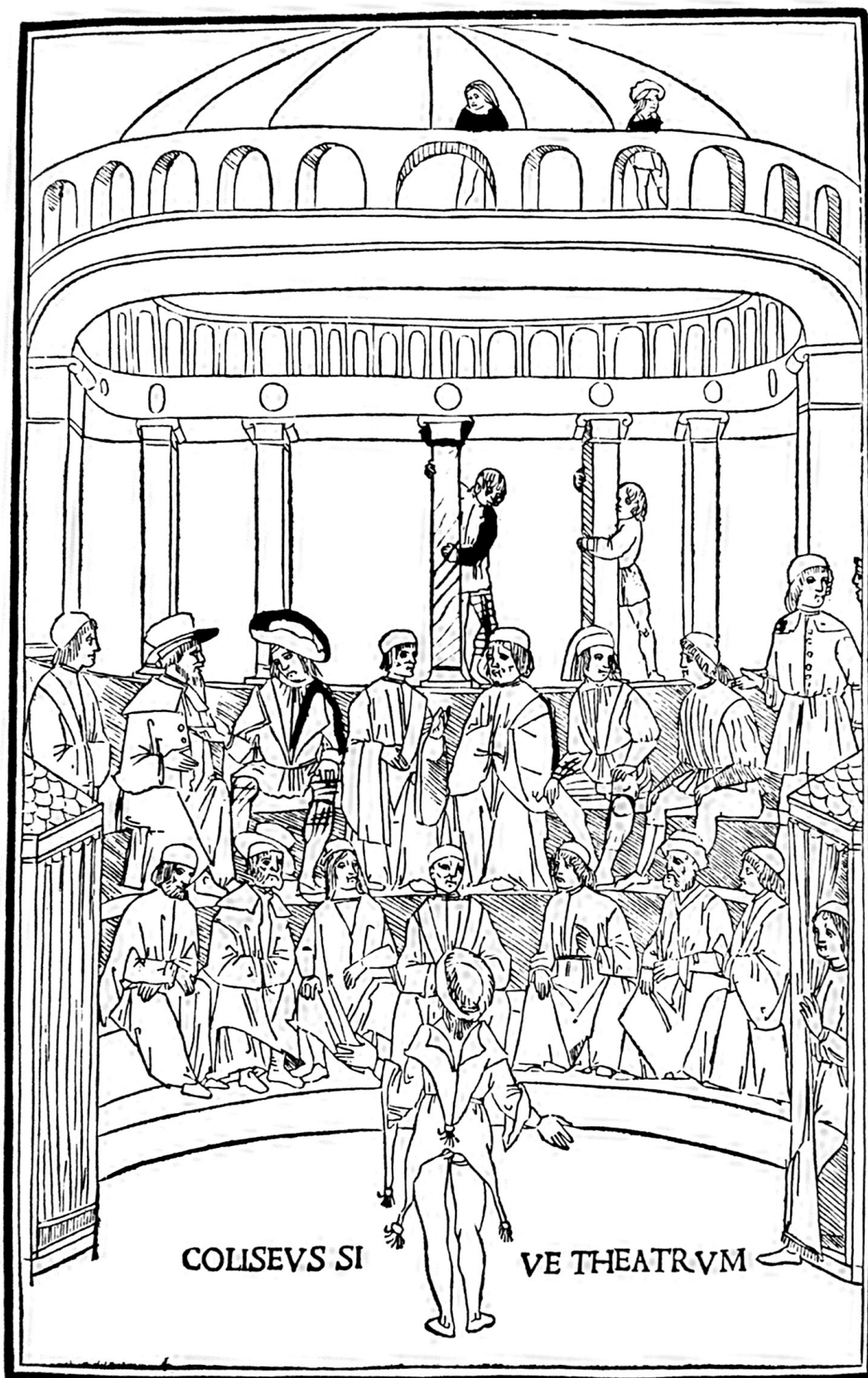
PRIMO LIBRO.

Vole essere a nauiganti caro; qualhora da oscu-  
ro et fortuneuole nembo sospinti errano et tra-  
uagliano la lor uia; col segno della indiana pi-  
etra ritrouare la tramontana in modo; che qua-  
le uento soffi conoscendo non sia lor tolto il potere et ue-  
la et gouerno la, doue essi di giugnere procacciano, o al-  
meno doue piu la loro saluetza ueggono, dirizzare:  
Et a quegli, che per straniera contrada caminano, è dol-  
ce; quando a parte uenuti, doue parimente molte uie fac-  
cian capo, in quale piu tosto debbano mettersi non scor-  
gendo stanno in sul pie dubitosi et sospesi; incontrare,  
chi loro la diritta insegni; si che essi possano a lalbergo  
sanza errore, o forse prima che la notte gli sopraggiunga,  
peruenire. Ilperche istimando io per quello, che si ue-  
de auenire tutto di, pochissimi essere queglihuomini; a  
quali nel peregrinaggio di questa nostra uita mortale  
hora dalla turba delle passioni soffiato, et hora dalle  
tante et cosi al uero somiglianti apparenze d'oppenioni  
fatto incerto, quasi per lo continuo et di calamita et di  
scorta non faccia mestiero; ho sempre giudicato gratioso  
ufficio per coloro usarsi; equali delle cose o ad essi auen-  
ute, o da altri apparate, o per se medesimi ritrouate  
trattando a glialtri huomini dimostrano come si possa  
in qualche parte di questa perigliosa strada et corso nõ  
errare. Percio che quale piu gratiosa cosa puo essere;  
che il giouare altrui? o pure che si puo qua giu fare  
piu conueneuole a chi è huomo; che essere a molti huo-  
mini di lor bene cagione? Et poi se è lodeuole per se  
(che è in ogni maniera lodeuolissimo) un huom solo san-  
za fallimento saper uiuere non inteso et non ueduto da  
persona; quanto piu è da credere che lodare si debba  
un altro; ilquale et sa esso la sua uita sanza fallo scor-

a iii

A page from Pietro  
Bembo's *Gli Asolani*  
(British Museum)

Opposite  
An illustration from  
Terence's Comedies,  
showing the kind of  
performance patronised  
by Caterina  
(British Library)





That is, however, not enough. Caterina was a woman of her moment to an extent that needs to be defined if we are to understand her legend, and then go beyond it to a fuller truth.

The difference between the early work of Giovanni Bellini, with his Mantegnesque beginnings, and the spell cast by his last achievements, such as his 'The Feast of the Gods', in Washington, in the National Gallery, is one of the most extraordinary and moving evolutions in the history of art. It is a reflection of the mood of his time in Venice, and on the terra ferma. All the arts and sensibility were touched. The most perfect expression of this is Giorgione. His magic, or rather the spell which he most surely distilled, has, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, many manifestations. Life at Caterina's 'court' at Asolo, at the Barco, and at the Villa dall' Aglio, was not the least of them.

Threads draw together. Bembo's *Gli Asolani*, 'A Concert at the Court of Caterina Cornaro' at Attingham, the reality of Caterina's world are all reflections of the sensibility of her moment in history, or of others' interpretations of it. Alvise Cornaro (1475-1566), the author of the *Discorsi intorno alla vita sobria*, wrote of his own villa: 'I can truly say that I have erected here an altar and temple to God, and gathered souls to worship Him, and this thought brings me each time renewed and boundless satisfaction and joy.' He might well have written those words about the Barco and the circle around his kinswoman Caterina.

Bembo, who was a key witness to that group of people, before he was made a cardinal and recalled to Rome in 1539, spent most of a period of twenty years living at his villa near Padua. Not only had he a profound influence upon the structure of the Italian language, but he was also to initiate a vogue for Neo-Platonism. Philosophy, in the formal sense, has seldom been the gift of Italy, yet the mood crystallised in *Gli Asolani* goes beyond the merits of that book. It is simplest to understand why this is so by considering the painting of the time.

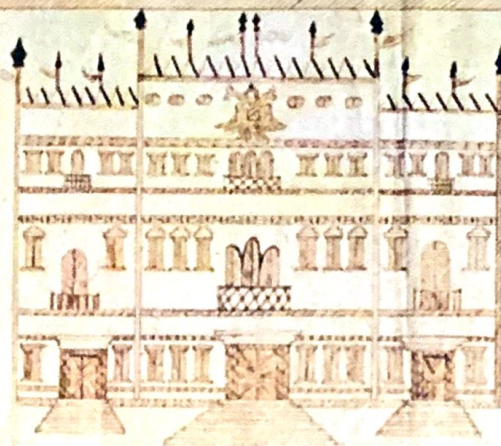
There is no more persuasive phase in art than the Giorgionesque. Giorgione's *oeuvre* is tiny and open to controversy: there are as many Giorgiones as there are art historians. Yet he influenced many painters, including men of the calibre of Giovanni Bellini, Titian and Palma Vecchio. Just as telling, there

Opposite  
Drawing of the site and  
buildings of the Barco  
c. 1750  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

Overleaf  
'A Concert at the Court  
of Caterina Cornaro';  
painting now thought to  
be nineteenth-century  
(Attingham Park,  
Shropshire)



*Palazzo Reale di Napoli*



*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*



*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*

*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*



*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*

*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*

*Palazzo della Regina (attuale via Maese)*





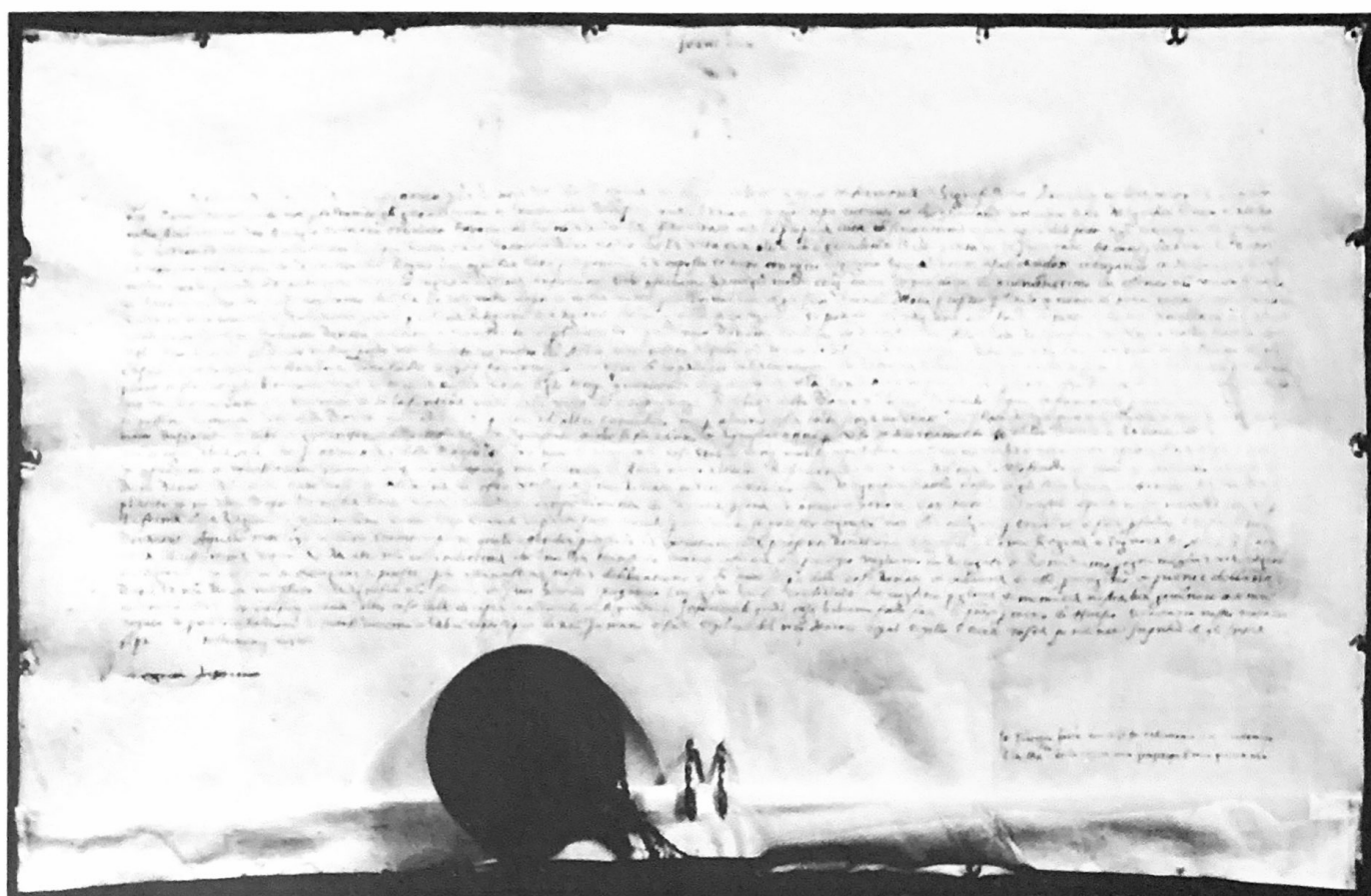












are numerous Giorgionesque paintings by lesser men: they move us, often deeply. A simple fact explains this. The Giorgionesque phase in art is the most poignant expression of one of those rare moments when men advance their cognition of themselves and the world about them. A prime instance of this movement of mind and heart is to be found in the life lived in the countryside of the Venetian terra ferma. One of the happiest expressions of that life was the circle about Caterina. No wonder she became a legend: it was based on something more persuasive than a brilliant court.

The Venetian patricians, and Caterina came from one of the greatest of Venetian families, in escaping to their villas on the mainland, where they gathered about them men of letters and poetry, artists and architects, opened up novel avenues of perception. Their architecture has set standards on every continent. Bembo gave shape to the Italian language and there was something else more intangible. Neo-Platonic thought was

Caterina's last will, one of three, was made in 1508 and bears her signature  
(Museo Civico, Asolo)

*Opposite*  
The loggia of the Barco







married to a fresh awareness of nature and man's capacities.

It should not be forgotten that *Gli Asolani* takes place in a corner of Caterina's park. Equally such a man as Navagero when he was ambassador to the Spanish court of Charles V wrote back to his friend Ramusio: '... I am a true epicurean, and should like to spend my whole life in a garden. Therefore, as you love me, dear Ramusio, take care of my garden, and tend my flowers, while I am absent from home.'

Life about the Mediterranean has at all times involved an acute awareness of nature. It has been lived in the open to an extent alien to northern peoples. Her years in Cyprus must have confirmed Caterina's inclination to find solace in nature. Her gift

Double — portrait  
Andrea Navagero (left)  
with Agostino Beazza-  
no, by Raphael  
(Galleria Doria-Pamfili,  
Rome)

*Opposite*  
Idealised portraits of  
Caterina and her  
husband James II by  
Camillo Mariani  
(Villa Cornaro,  
Piombino Dese)



is not so much the obviously exaggerated elements of the legend. A balanced existence, offering solace in the face of harsh political realities, was a rarer achievement. If we recognise this the message of *Gli Asolani* is seen to be relevant. Caterina's court is to be understood as an expression of a moment in history that mattered. The legend of Caterina was based on a truth.

It could not last. On 18 May 1508 Caterina suffered a 'gravissimo mal di colico'. Worse was to come. By February 1509 Maximilian's troops were advancing on Asolo and she withdrew to Venice. Life still went on, and in the spring Caterina held a reception for the marriage of a relation, but by 2 June the army of Maximilian was close to Asolo. The *consiglio cittadino* appointed five counsellors and gave them full powers to do what was necessary to guard public order and to defend Asolo against the enemy. It was unavailing. On 7 June Maximilian's banner was raised over Asolo Castle. Then on 13 June Caterina wrote to the *Sindaco* and the people of Asolo telling them to be 'di buon animo, che per la gratia de Dio non siamo fora da speranza.' The words were brave, but Caterina was impotent. It was nothing new for her. The world of *Gli Asolani* must have seemed distant. By 13 July all the territory of Asolo was occupied by the Imperial troops, who looted and pillaged the countryside.

However the Venetian response was swift. On the same day, 13 July, there was a battle close to the Barco and the Imperial troops were defeated. By 1 August they had retired, but they left chaos in their wake. Among other destruction, they set fire to and ruined the Barco. The place where Caterina, and those about her, had spent so many civilised hours was effectively no more. Caterina was not young. It must have been bitter. We need not dwell on the anguish she felt when on 1 August the *Podestà* of Asolo, Antonio Venier, went to Venice to report to her.

Nor was the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the Imperial forces pleasant. In October three Asolani, Giulio Barigiani di Treviso, Paolo Calvi and Andrea Matto, who had collaborated with the enemy, were captured and hanged as traitors in the Piazza at Asolo, while two others only saved themselves by flight.

Opposite  
The Barco in its present  
state

The majority were though faithful. On 27 November the *consiglio cittadino* elected four ambassadors, Adamo Colbertaldo,











Taddeo Bovolini, Antonio Lugato and Bernardino Colbertaldo to convey to her the loyalty of the people of Asolo. She was still the 'Domina of Asolo', and on 6 December Caterina wrote to Antonio Venier, to say she was pleased at the ambassadors' visit and had agreed to all their requests. Above all she confirms that the ancient statutes will be preserved without any innovation.

Yet these must have been worrying, unhappy times for Caterina. We do not know in detail about the progress of her illness, but Asolo was not her only worry. In April 1510, following conspiracies to return Caterina to the throne of Cyprus, George Cornaro was instructed by the Council of Ten to watch over his sister. Was she at last again to be a real queen? The prospect must have haunted her, but it was to come to nothing. Asolo and the devastated countryside around were more real.

It was time to go back to her make-believe kingdom. Not least it must have seemed expedient to do so, and, in the same month of April, Caterina returned to her substitute for Cyprus. She was, we are told, received with enthusiasm by the population. Again there was an address of welcome. This time it was by Adamo Colbertaldo. This address, his *Pastorella*, an oration in verse, must have been a recompense for all she had been through. The sentiment is that of poetry, the praise is lavish. There are wolves, but at the end we are assured that her return has brought happiness and security.

Any respite was however to be shortlived. Only a month after Caterina's return to Asolo the Imperial forces again appeared in the neighbourhood. Once more she retired to Venice, this time being accompanied by many of her people as far as Casella, just beyond Altivole. She was never to see Asolo again. What is more she was to be humbled, for on 10 June the Imperial commander, Leonardo Trissino, officially confiscated her property.

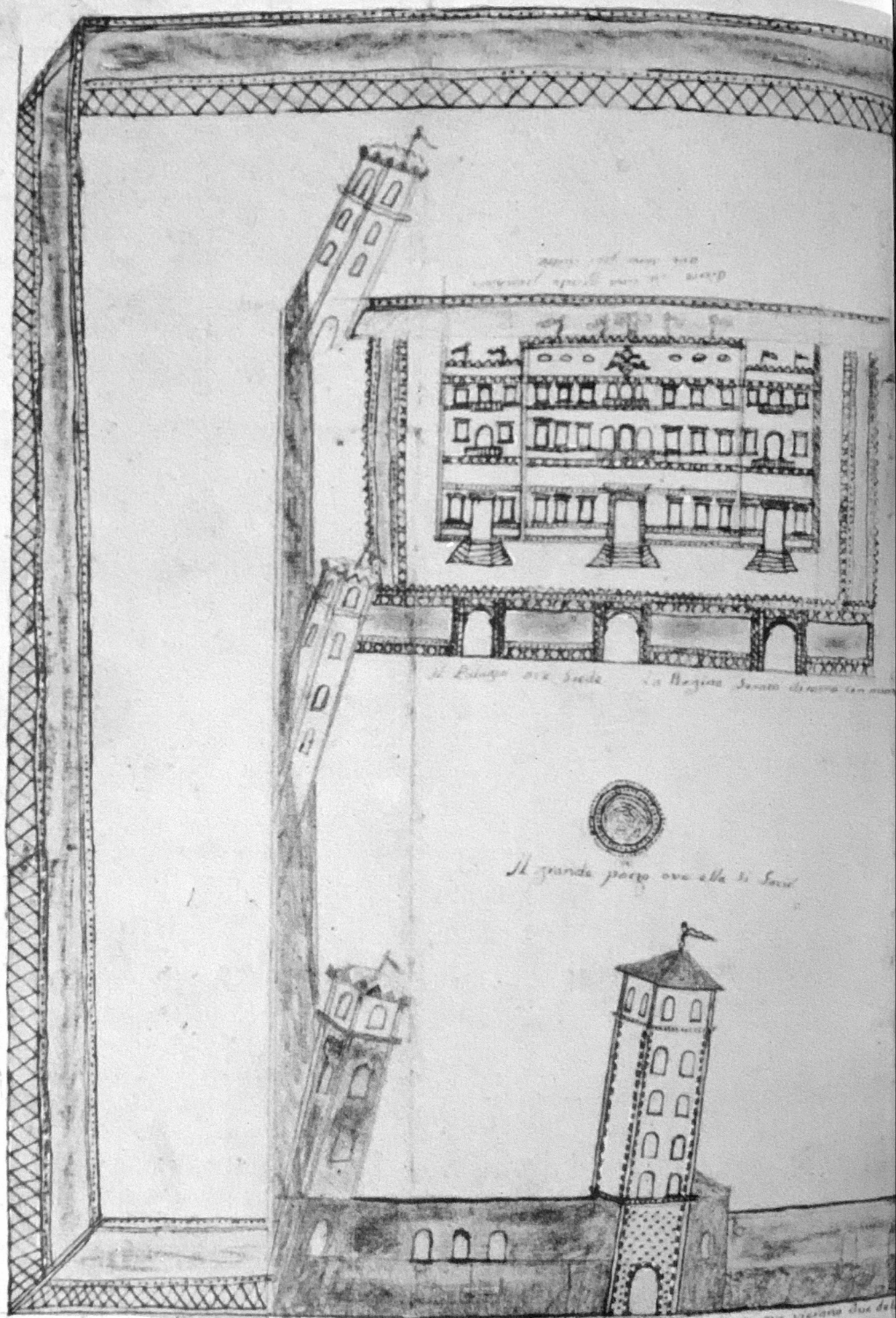
The end came quickly. On 10 July 1510, after a short illness of the stomach lasting for three days, Caterina died at four o'clock in the morning. She was fifty-six. Sanudo records that the bells of St. Mark's were rung to mark the event.

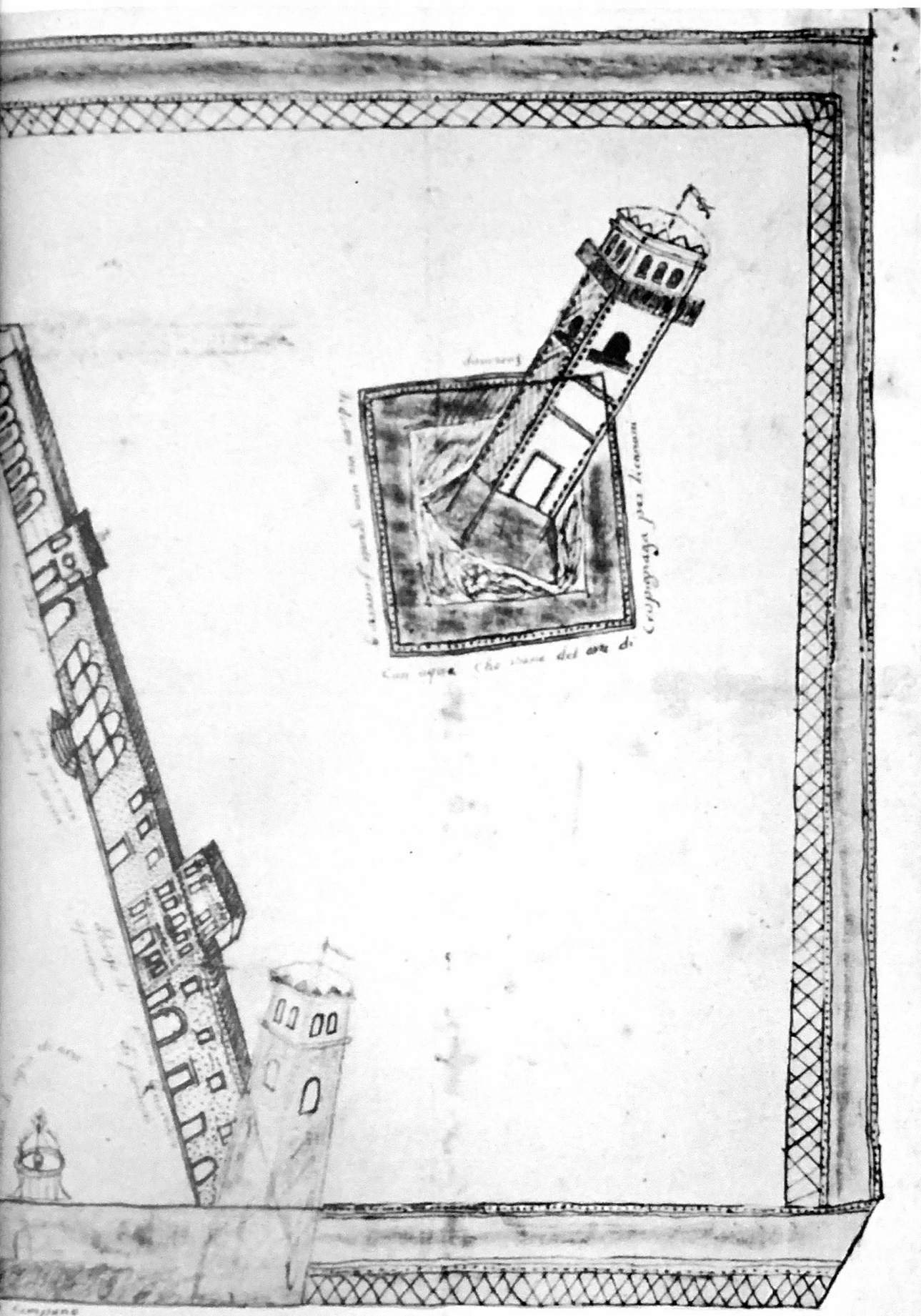
She left no vexatious problems. As far back as 1500 she had drawn up documents bequeathing all her property to her brother George, to whom she feels 'molte obligationi'. Also it was

*Overleaf*  
Plan of the Barco; early  
seventeenth century

*Opposite*  
Frescoes in the loggia of  
the Barco, representing  
the arms of the King-  
dom of Cyprus







più per la ragione di che rispetto di fare a più per cento in Chialara in caspino  
 Altravole e come ed in 15 anni algha padre un canotto chinuotto. fanno ad  
 tutti con sudore di cantina e pueria ed in tutto ammonta face gli pueri  
 ed ancora l'altare non può essere e fare in Chialara più fare il mio dominio



Marble slab on the floor  
in front of Caterina's  
monument bearing her  
full regal titles



characteristic of her that she gave instructions regarding the care and conservation of the Barco.

Her funeral procession on 11 July, and the actual funeral on 12 July, were worthy of a Queen. Yet there were stark contrasts. Caterina was embalmed, and when they came to place her in her coffin and she was laid out in the church of S. Cassiano she was in a Franciscan habit of coarse brown cloth. Outwardly all was regal; indeed her crown was placed upon the coffin. We know all this from Sanudo, who as usual was faithful in recording the details in his diary. A bridge of boats was built across the Grand Canal and Caterina was carried over to the church of SS. Apostoli. The coffin was followed by the Patriarch, by Alvise Priuli, in place of the Doge, who was absent, the Signory and the Archbishop of Spalato, relations, retainers, close friends and a great crowd bearing flaming torches. What is more the elements played their part: just as when she arrived back in Venice from Cyprus, there was a fierce storm, which seems to have alarmed Sanudo and others. The actual funeral service took place in the Cornaro chapel in SS. Apostoli. It was Navagero who delivered the oration. Unfortunately, as with so many of his other works, he was later to destroy the text. It is however not difficult to imagine what he must have said. The stage would have been set for the legend.

*Opposite*  
The monument to Caterina by Bernardino Contino, erected in the south transept of the church of S. Salvatore in Venice

*Overleaf*  
Central detail of the monument to Caterina (S. Salvatore, Venice)





















There is one last chapter. At the end of the sixteenth century Caterina's remains were moved from SS. Apostoli to the church of S. Salvatore, close to the Rialto Bridge. It is an appropriate spot, for the church also contains Titian's 'Annunciation', of 1566, one of the greatest of his late works. Among the things to be regretted in connection with Caterina is that Titian's portrait of her has been lost, but it is some comfort to know that her final resting place is close to another great Titian.

Her own memorial in the south transept of S. Salvatore is worthy. It is by Bernardino Contino and shows Caterina handing over her crown to the Doge. The church contains several grand monuments and statues by Sansovino, Vittoria and Giulio del Moro. At the end this daughter of Venice rests in good company in her native city. Yet today in S. Salvatore our thoughts turn to the open air: they dwell in the park at Asolo, at the Barco and away to the south in Cyprus.

Central detail from the monument to Caterina's family

*Opposite*

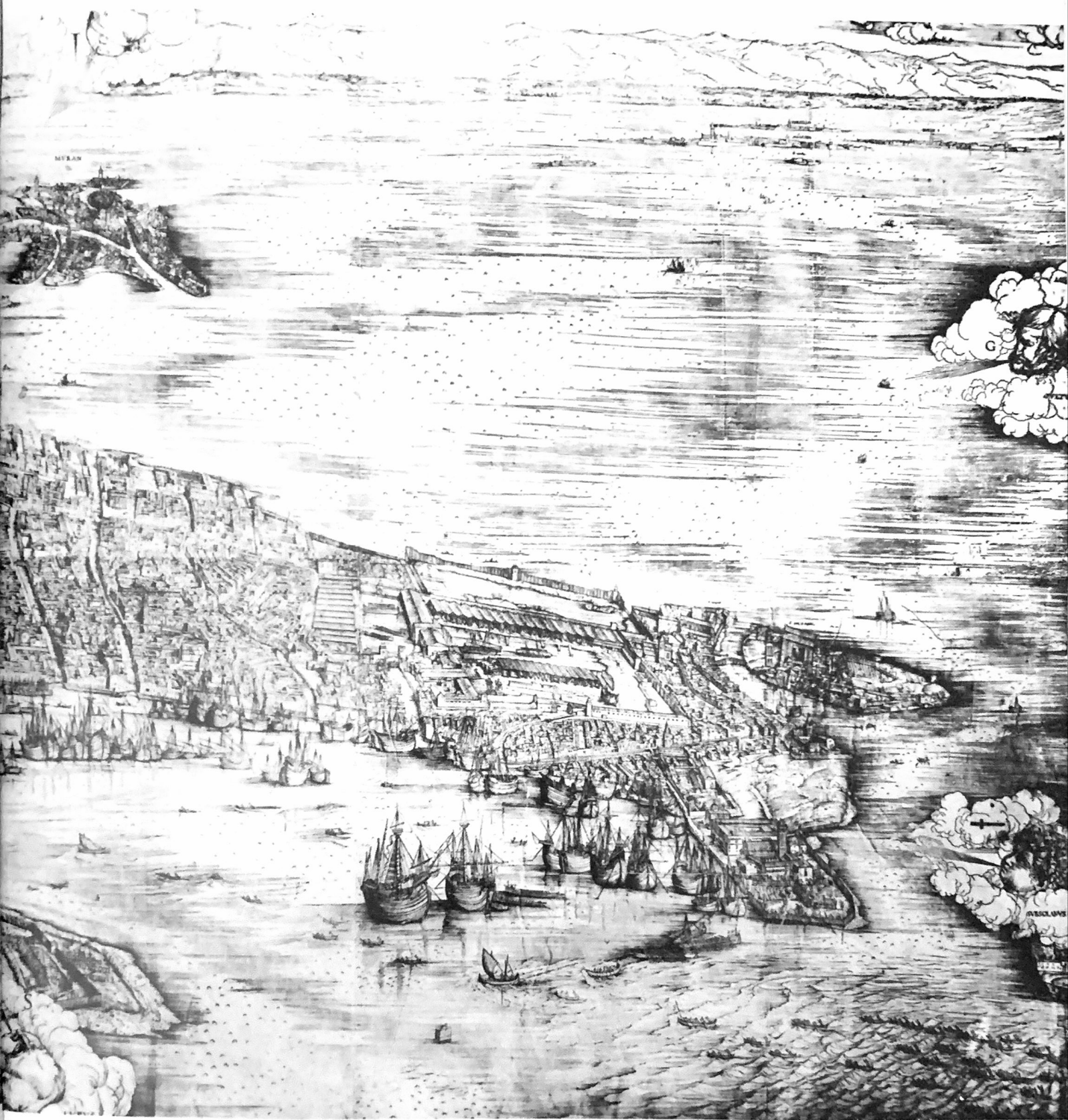
The monument to the Cornaro family by Bernardino Contino, erected in 1570 in the north transept of the church of S. Salvatore in Venice

*Overleaf*

Bird's-eye view of Venice, attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari, published 1500 in Venice by Antonio Kolb









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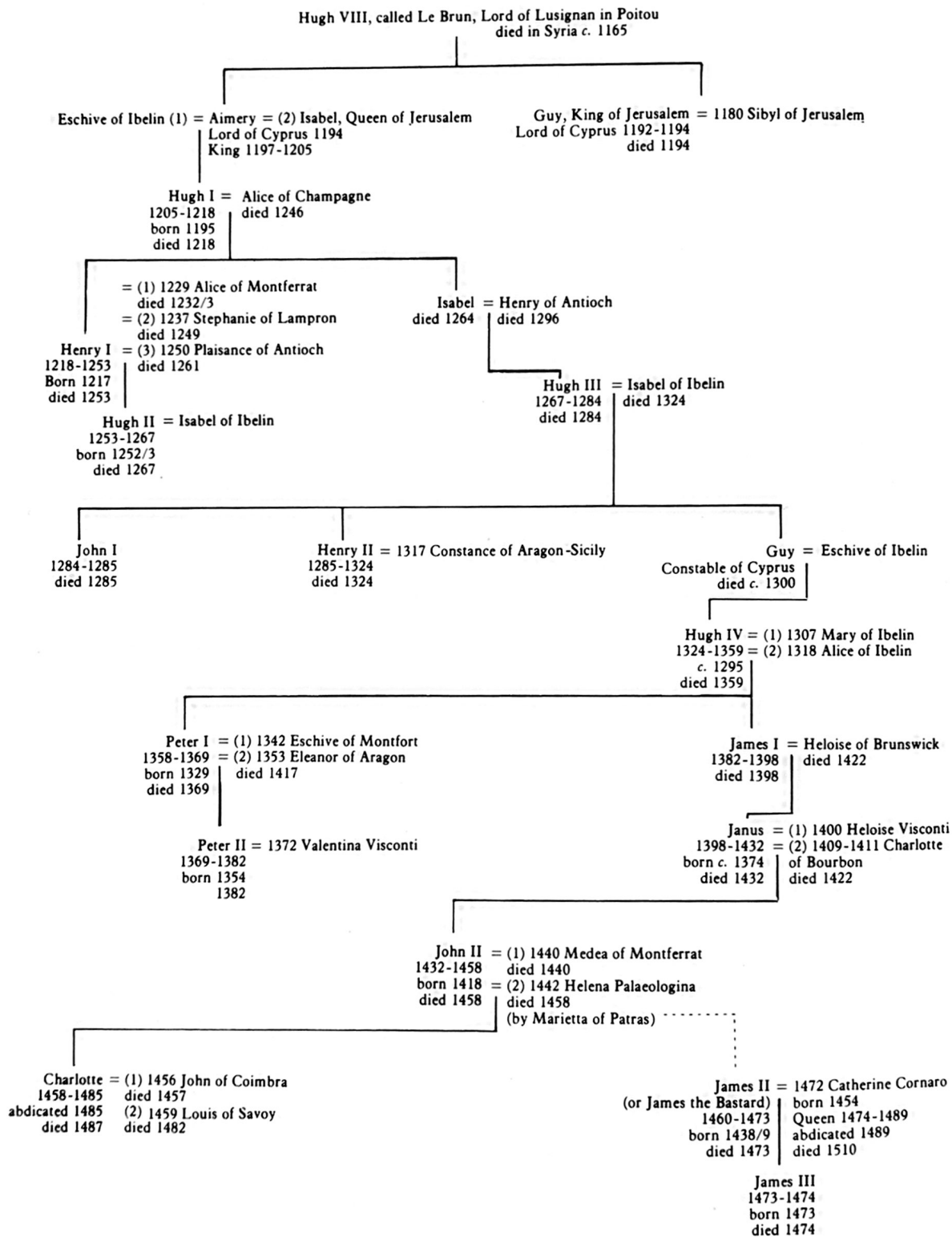
## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1438 (or 1439) Birth of James the Bastard, son of John II and Marietta of Patras.
- 1454 (25 November) Caterina Cornaro is born in Venice.
- 1458 (15 October) Charlotte is crowned in St. Sophia Cathedral.
- 1460 (September) James successfully invades Cyprus with Egyptian support; he is proclaimed king as James II.
- 1464 (January) Surrender of Famagusta to James by the Genoese.
- 1464 (Autumn) Surrender of Kyrenia; end of civil war.
- 1468 (July) James II marries Caterina Cornaro by proxy.
- 1472 (14 July) Caterina Cornaro is adopted as a daughter by the Venetian state.
- 1472 (September) Caterina makes her will just before embarking for Cyprus.
- 1472 (Autumn) Caterina arrives in Cyprus and marries James II in the cathedral of St. Nicholas, Famagusta.
- 1473 (April) James excludes the galleys of Provveditore Peter Soranzo from Famagusta harbour.
- 1473 (6-7 July) James II dies after a sudden illness.
- 1473 (14 August) Charlotte tries to seize Kyrenia.
- 1473 (27 August) Birth of James II.
- 1473 (September) Christening of James III in the presence of the Captain-General of the Sea, Peter Mocenigo.
- 1473 (14 November) Coup d'état by Catalan party. Andrew Cornaro and Mark Bembo are murdered.
- 1474 (January) Visit of Captain-General of the Sea Peter Mocenigo with the fleet. Collapse of the Catalan regime. An order banishes all Catalans, Sicilians and Neapolitans from the island; their property is confiscated.
- 1474 (28 May) A provveditore and two councillors are appointed.
- 1474 (August) King James III dies one or two days before his first birthday.
- 1475 (April) Mark Cornaro arrives in Cyprus.
- 1475 (April) Caterina leaves Famagusta for Nicosia.
- 1479 Mark Venier tries to assassinate Caterina.
- 1479 (6 September) Mark Cornaro dies in Venice.

- 1487 (16 July) Charlotte dies in Rome.
- 1487 (21 February) The Senate discusses annexation of Cyprus.
- 1488 Plans to marry Caterina to an illegitimate son of the King of Naples.
- 1489 (February) Captain-General Francis Priuli is ordered to Cyprus to remove the Queen.
- 1489 (26 February) The Queen officially abdicates at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Famagusta.
- 1489 (14 March) Caterina, accompanied by her brother George, embarks at Famagusta to return to Venice.
- 1489 (5 June) She arrives at S. Nicolò di Lido.
- 1489 (6 June) In a ceremony at St. Mark's Caterina symbolically transfers the crown to the Doge.
- 1489 (20 June) She is given Asolo as a dominion and retains her civil list.
- 1489 (11 October) Caterina makes her official entry into Asolo.
- 1490 (-1492) She builds the Barco, a country estate at Altivole, near Asolo.
- 1491 She presents to the cathedral at Asolo vestments and a baptismal font made by Francesco Grazioli.
- 1493 At Murano she receives the visit of Isabella d'Este and Beatrice Sforza.
- 1497 (4 September) She visits her brother George, now *Podestà* of Brescia.
- 1497 (Autumn) Caterina flees to Venice in the face of the Ottoman troops of Bayazid II.
- 1500 She attends the wedding of Fiammetta, one of her maids of honour.
- 1500 She is painted by Gentile Bellini; she also appears in his 'Miracle of the Cross'.
- 1501 Fiorenza, Caterina's mother, dies in Venice.
- 1505 Pietro Bembo publishes *Gli Asolani*, based on Caterina's court at Asolo.
- 1507 (23 September) Caterina holds a reception at her family palace in Venice for the marriage of her nephew Philip Capello. One of the earliest performances in the Veneto of a 'commedia' takes place.
- 1508 (1 May) Caterina makes her last will, leaving everything to her brother George.
- 1508 (18 May) Marino Sanudo, the diarist, records Caterina's illness.
- 1509 (February) Fearing an invasion by the troops of Maximilian I she removes to Venice leaving Antonio Colbertaldo as viceroy.
- 1509 (7 June) Maximilian's banner is raised at the castle in Asolo.
- 1509 (13 July) All the territory of Asolo is occupied by the Imperial troops. There is however on this day a battle close to the Barco and the Venetians are victorious.
- 1509 (1 August) The Imperial troops withdraw but set fire to the Barco.
- 1509 (October) Three citizens of Asolo are hanged as traitors.
- 1509 (November) Four distinguished citizens of Asolo go to Venice to convey to Caterina the loyalty of the people and to present various requests.
- 1509 (6 December) Caterina writes to say she is pleased with the visit and agrees to their requests.
- 1510 (April) The Council of Ten, because of rumours of conspiracies to return Caterina to the throne of Cyprus, instruct George Cornaro to watch over his sister. Caterina returns to Asolo and is greeted enthusiastically.
- 1510 (May) She goes back to Venice; Imperial troops occupy the Barco.
- 1510 (10 July) Caterina Cornaro, last Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia, dies in Venice.
- 1510 (12 July) Caterina is buried at the church of SS. Apostoli. Andrea Navagero delivers the eulogy.
- Her remains are transferred to the church of S. Salvatore in the sixteenth century.



# THE LUSIGNAN KINGS OF CYPRUS



## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

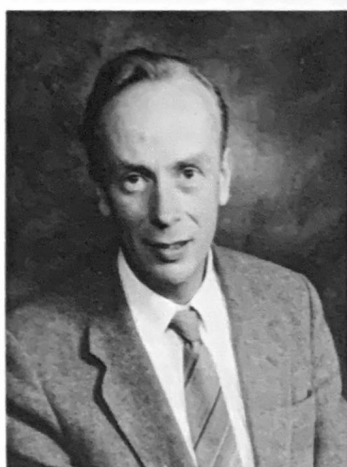
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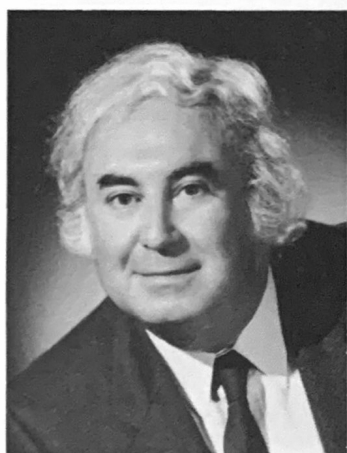
Lady HUNT, née Iro Myrianthousis, was born in Cyprus and was educated in Nicosia and at the London School of Economics where she studied Social Science. Before she married Sir David in 1968 she did social work in Britain, Cyprus and Nigeria; she later took up publishing and is now a director of Trigraph Ltd.



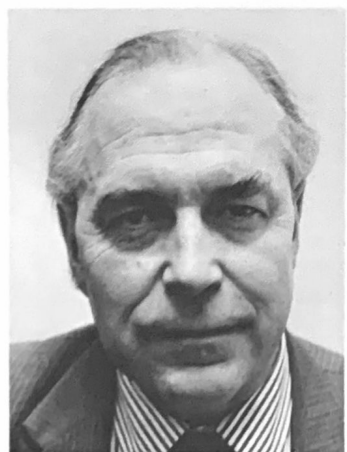




Dr. PETER W. EDBURY was born in Chichester in 1947 and was educated at St. Andrew's University, graduating with a first class honours degree in Medieval History in 1970. In 1975 he received a Ph.D. for a thesis entitled *The Feudal Nobility of Cyprus, 1192-1400*. From 1973 to 1977 he was a Research Lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford and since 1977 he has been a lecturer in the Department of History at University College Cardiff. He has published widely on the history of the Crusades and on the Lusignan regime in Cyprus. His *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (written in collaboration with Professor John Gordon Rowe) was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1988. He is at present working on a study of Cyprus under the Lusignans, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374*.



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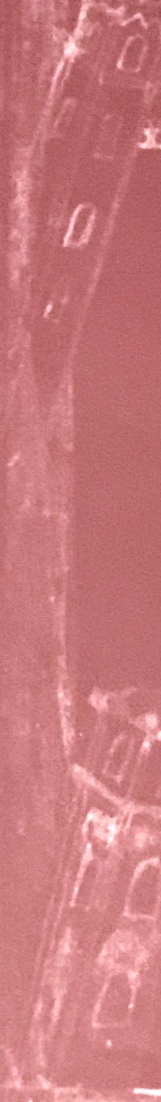
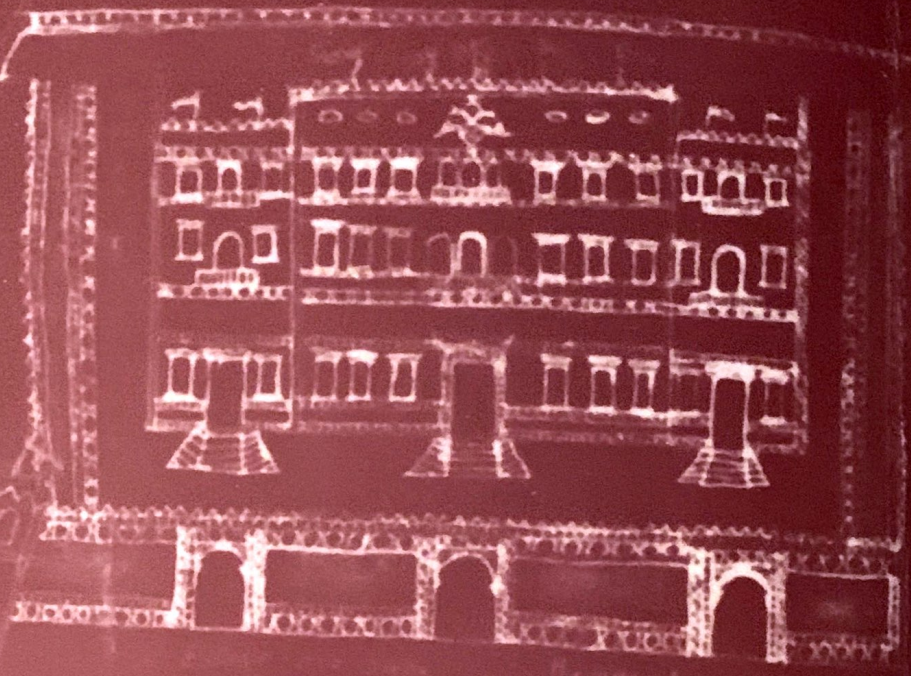
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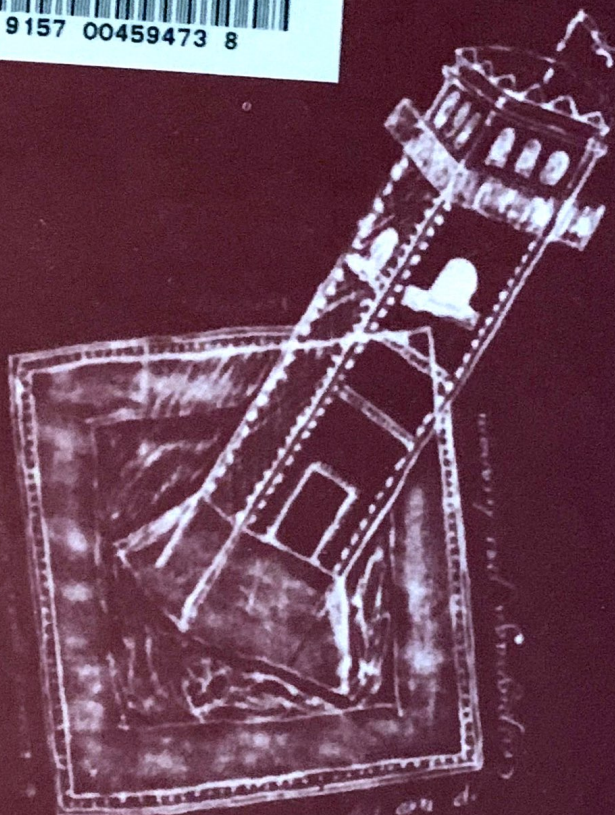
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